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## HOLY MASS AND LIFE







*"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day." I Cor. 15:55*

# HOLY MASS AND LIFE

By

REV. A. BISKUPEK, S.V.D.



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## FOREWORD

**A**LTHOUGH he is dead, the author of these plain but practical pages still speaks to us; his work follows him. And this is what he says to each one of us:

*Place together the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the adoration of the angels, the labor of the Apostles, the sufferings of the martyrs, the austerities of the anachorets, the purity of virgins, the virtues of confessors, in a word, the good works of all the saints from the beginning to the end of the world; add to all these the merits of the saints of a thousand worlds more perfect than ours: it is of faith that you will not have the virtue of a single Mass. The all-sufficient reason is that the Mass is identical with Christ's oblation on the Cross.*

*Oh, the infinitude of the riches enshrined in the sacrifice of Golgotha as re-enacted on the Altar! Oh, the supreme efficacy of that Prayer of the Eternal Son to the Eternal Father—the Prayer which because of His divine reverence and respect for His co-eternal, co-equal Son, (Hebr. 5:7) the Father must hear and answer.*

*Such is the summary of the last book which Father Biskupek has left us, a book which, we make bold to say, is redolent of and remindful of the Imitation of Christ: same simplicity, same profundity. There is no doubt that those who will use it will find it both immediately and permanently helpful as an aid to their devotion to Holy Mass.*

REV. JOSEPH LELEN, PH.D.



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## Introduction

**R**EADING the New Testament attentively, one cannot but be impressed with the high degree of Christian perfection placed before the faithful as their ideal. Our Lord wants all to be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, to learn of Him to be meek and humble of heart, to love one another as He has loved them. These are the fundamental principles; He gives definite details in many places throughout the Gospel, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. The eight beatitudes are, what we might call, a pattern for heroic sanctity; yet they are meant for all. Purity of intention that excludes all selfishness, continuous prayer, forgiving charity, unbounded trust in Providence, unceasing work for God and heaven, are all things expected of the disciple of Christ. The apostles echo the spirit and the words of Jesus. For St. Paul, the Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit, a member of Christ's body; the very idea of it excludes sinful and worldly desires, and calls for love of God and neighbor that makes of life a living and holy sacrifice. St. Peter reminds the faithful of their dignity; they are partakers in the divine nature and life, a priestly nation, a holy priesthood. Therefore they are expected to follow in the footsteps of Christ, be holy as He is holy, and consider themselves as strangers and pilgrims in this life, ever moving onward to their undefiled and unfading heavenly inheritance. St. James

insists upon active, living faith, which means, of course, the doing of all things proposed in the commandments and the teaching of Christ; in particular, he warns against the sins of the tongue; yet such is the significance of the proper use of speech, that he who does not fail by his tongue is a perfect man. St. John is the apostle of charity; we must lay down our lives for our brethren, and he who hates his brother is a murderer and the love of God is not in him. Charity is the fulfillment of the whole law.

The ideal of Christian perfection has not changed. It is proposed to us not only in the sacred writings but in living reality. Jesus our divine Teacher and Model continues to live in our midst as our pattern of a holy life in the Blessed Eucharist, the memorial of all His wonderful works. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, instructions, and ceremonies, holy Church places before the faithful the ideal of Christian perfection as taught and exemplified by our Blessed Savior. Holy Mass thus becomes a real school of perfection. It can easily be seen what an important part this aspect of Holy Mass must hold in the life of the Church. If properly understood by the faithful, every Holy Mass becomes for them a lesson in Christian living, a source of inspiration and grace. The following reflections on the Ordinary of the Mass endeavor to present the Holy Sacrifice as the pattern of Christian perfection.



# I

## From the Beginning of the Mass to the Kyrie

**H**OLY MASS is the unbloody re-enactment of the bloody sacrifice of our salvation, Jesus our peace and reconciliation. The only obstacle to making salvation, peace, and reconciliation our own is sin. Sin therefore must be removed, and it can be removed only by repentance. God who is offended by sin is appeased by penance; in His infinite mercy He promises forgiveness to the sinner, "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities, that he hath done; in his justice which he hath wrought he shall live." (Ezekiel 18:21ff) Hence we must hope in God, repent our sins, and ask forgiveness, if we wish to share in the fruits of Holy Mass. These are precisely the thoughts and sentiments expressed in the opening prayers of holy Mass.

## 1. UNTO THE ALTAR OF GOD

**H**OLY MASS ordinarily begins with the recitation of the forty-second Psalm at the foot of the altar. The place, which this Psalm has been given in Mass, suggests that it was composed by David during the rebellion of Absalom. A great part of the people, the unholy nation, had joined the rebel; one particular individual, the unjust and deceitful man, must have caused the psalmist extraordinary grief by his treachery and injustice. Away from Jerusalem and its sanctuary on the holy mountain, the psalmist finds his consolation in prayer and is certain of eventual victory and return to the temple for glad thanksgiving. Bearing in mind this historical background of the psalm, its application to the Christian life offers no difficulty.

*Render me justice, O God, and defend my cause against an unholy nation; deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man. For Thou, O God, art my strength. Why hast Thou forsaken me, and why do I live in sorrow, afflicted by the enemy?*

Unholy nations have risen against Christ and His Church in our days; evil spirits roam through the world seeking the ruin of souls. And the unjust and deceitful man is right within us, that is, corrupt nature with all its evil lusts. We have greatly suffered from these our ene-



*The priest marks himself with the sign of the Cross*



mies in the past and we are fully aware of their cunning and malice. We take our case before God; He is our Creator and Lord. Despite our faults and failings we are conscious of His sovereign rights over us and we want to render Him loyal service. Interference with this service on the part of our enemies is also injustice against Him. In our helplessness we turn to Him, praying that He may take our case into His hands. We trust in Him, though we do not understand the mysteries of His providence—why He acts as if He had forsaken us, why He allows the powers of darkness to triumph and to inflict such harm on souls.

*Send forth Thy light and Thy truth; may they guide me and conduct me to Thy holy hill and into Thy tabernacle. And I will go in to the altar of God, the God who fills me with joy and exultation.*

The teachings of the faith are our light, the faithfulness of God is our hope. Faith and hope lead us to Calvary, the holy hill, on which was offered the sacrifice of our salvation; they lead us to the altar, because on it will be re-enacted in a mysterious manner the sacrifice of Calvary. Here darkness is changed into light, sorrow into joy, here invincible courage is instilled into the soul, so that we can take up anew the struggle against unholy nations and the unjust and deceitful man with the certainty of final victory.

*And to Thee, O God, my God I will give praise upon the harp. Why art thou sad, O my soul? Why art thou troubled within me? Hope in God, for I will again give praise to Him, my Savior and my God.*

As in past, so also in present and future afflictions, God will come to our assistance; there is no reason for yielding to sadness or despondency. So I, too, will rejoice. My soul shall be the harp on the strings of which I will sing the praises of God and give thanks to Him for the great things He has done for me. Those who trust in God shall never be disappointed.

## 2. I HAVE SINNED

Sin was and is the principal obstacle to joy in the Lord; it must be given no place in the Christian life. If we have sinned we must seek forgiveness. We do it in the Confiteor and the prayers which follow it. And "If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity." (1 John 1:9)

The structure of the Confiteor is dramatic. We are to see ourselves as defendants in a court trial. God presides; angels, saints, and the faithful assist; in their presence we plead guilty and ask for mercy.

*I confess to almighty God*—We would expect this confession of our guilt to be directed to the all-knowing God who has witnessed our sins, or to the all-merciful God from whom we hope to obtain mercy and forgiveness. Yes, we turn to the almighty God, because forgiveness of sin implies a restoration or increase of the life of grace, which is a participation in the divine life, and God alone can give it in virtue of His almighty power.



*Bowing profoundly the priest recites the Confiteor*





*To blessed Mary, ever virgin*—The Mother of our Savior and Judge, our Mother and the Mediatrix of all grace, the Virgin merciful.

*To blessed Michael, the Archangel*—Leader in the warfare against Satan; we want to break with Satan and rejoin the heavenly armies.

*To blessed John the Baptist*—Preacher of penance, who prepared the way for the Savior and led the people to Him, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world. We wish to follow his directions.

*To the holy apostles Peter and Paul*—Peter, who holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven; Paul, who is the herald of God's mercy.

*To all the saints*—All of whom owe their salvation to the mercy of God.

*To you, brethren; to you, Father*—This is a most touching feature in the Confiteor. The priest is human; he may and he does fall. He may have scandalized the faithful; he may have been an obstacle to the growth of the kingdom of Christ. But notwithstanding all this, the people have no reason to despise him or think themselves better. They, too, have sinned, and the priest has given them absolution; he has looked into the depth of their weakness. It behooves both, priest and people, humbly to admit their guilt and to beg for forgiveness. It is the best way to repair the wrong of the past.

*I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed*—Sin is the greatest evil in the world; it exceeds

all measure of the excusable or allowable. It is an abuse of the most precious faculties with which God has endowed man: reason and free will. The sinner defiled the sanctuary of his mind with evil thoughts and intentions; their malice was carried into the minds of others by means of speech and thus the evil spread. Deeds followed and brought to completion the evil of sin.

*Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault*—That which makes sin to be what it is, is my free will. Only in as much as thoughts, words, deeds are imputable to me can they be sinful. Sin is all my fault, all my own. True, often sin was committed through weakness. But, that I was so weak was my fault. I did not flee the occasion of sin, I did not seek strength in prayer and the sacraments, I did not keep in close touch with our Blessed Lord and our heavenly Mother. Hence I confess, I do not deny, I do not excuse myself; I have sinned through my most grievous fault.

*Therefore I beseech the blessed Mary ever virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, all the saints, and you, brethren; you, Father; to pray to the Lord our God for me*—The saints will intercede for us; they cannot resist the appeal of such a humble confession. In the repentant sinner they see souls redeemed by the blood of Christ and their own future companions in eternity.

Thus, united in humility and sorrow for their sins, priest and people stand before the altar of sacrifice. They are asking for things which the loving Heart of Jesus is most eager to give—forgiveness of sins for which He shed His most precious blood. They receive what



*The priest prays for pardon as he ascends the altar-steps and approaches the Holy of Holies*



they ask through the mouth of the priest as he pronounces the words of absolution:

*May almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you your sins and lead you to life everlasting. May the almighty and merciful God grant us pardon, absolution and full remission of our sins. Amen.*

### 3. LIFE, SALVATION, JOY

Implied, though not expressed in the Confiteor, is the petition for restoration of the things lost through sin and protection against future falls. This petition is now stated explicitly and in a manner which demonstrates the unspeakable malice of sin and its terrible effects.

*Turn to us, O God, and give us life, and Thy people shall rejoice in Thee.*

This is the human way of expressing ourselves. We naturally turn away from a disgusting and repulsive sight. Sin is the most repulsive sight for the infinitely holy God, and makes Him, so to say, turn away from the sinner in disgust. If we could see a soul in the state of mortal sin and behold the death and desolation sin has brought to it, we would be horrified. But we believe what faith teaches about the effects of sin, and faith inspires this ardent petition that God will turn to us again, restore to us His life and love, for then only shall we be able to rejoice again and be happy.

*Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy and grant us Thy salvation.*

The appeal is made to the mercy of God, for we have no claim of justice to forgiveness and grace. We stand before God as debtors unable to pay their debts, as beggars with nothing to call their own, as traitors deserving death, as sick and afflicted with an incurable disease, as prodigals, who have squandered their Father's substance and are not worthy to be called His children. But God is infinitely merciful; neither the malice of sin nor their number can exhaust His mercy. Blessed Henry Suso has strikingly illustrated the wonderful mercy of God, when he compared it to a fiery ball as large as the sun, and all the sins of men to a handful of straw. Throw that handful of straw into that immense ocean of fire and see how it is burned up instantly. So our sins shall be burned away in the infinite mercy of God and we shall be saved.

*O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto Thee.*

A man lost in a forest will shout for help, hoping that some one will hear him; people caught in a burning house frantically call for means of escape; sick persons suffering from intense pain may scream and moan aloud. The sinner is lost in the dark thickets of the world, caught in the snares of burning passions and cannot find the way out; he is afflicted with a disease which no human physician can heal. What wonder that he cries out in horror at the realization of his condition and calls for help. However, our prayer for help need

not be shouted out in a loud voice, but it must be the soul's sincere appeal to the merciful God. The cry of the soul goes farther than the cry of the mouth. United to the prayer of our divine Mediator, who "in the days of his earthly life, with a loud cry and tears, offered up prayers and supplications to him, who was able to save him from death and was heard because of his reverent submission" (Hebrews 5:7), it penetrates the clouds and reaches the throne of God's mercy, and the answer will be: mercy, life, salvation, joy.

#### 4. INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES

The priest now ascends the altar steps. In the prayer which he recites at the same time, the altar is spoken of as the holy of holies. The altar, upon which the Holy Sacrifice is offered, is indeed the antitype of the holy of holies in the tabernacle of old. In that holy of holies was kept the ark of the covenant, which contained the tablets of the law, given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and a vessel with manna, the tokens of God's merciful love for His people. Only once a year, on the day of atonement, the high priest alone was allowed to enter it, and that only after a long preparation and the performance of impressive rites. The Holy Spirit signified by this that the way into heaven was not yet thrown open, inasmuch as the Jewish material sacrifices could not perfect the worshipper in conscience. This could be done and was done by our eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, by virtue of His own blood. He, who offered Himself through the Holy Spirit unblem-



ished unto God, can and will cleanse our conscience from the dead works of sin to serve the living God. (Hebrews 9:8ff)

*Take away from us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, our iniquities, that with pure minds we may enter the holy of holies.*

The shadow of the Old Testament has given way to the full light of the revelation, the type to reality. Our altar is the true holy of holies. The divine High Priest will re-enact on it His bloody sacrifice of atonement in an unbloody manner, just as He anticipated it at the Last Supper. So much greater is, therefore, our obligation to approach this holy of holies with pure minds, purified in the fire of repentant love and the desire to please God.

*We beseech Thee, O Lord, through the merits of Thy saints, whose relics are here, and of all the saints, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to forgive all my sins.*

This prayer is said by the priest standing inclined in the middle of the altar; when mentioning the relics he kisses it. Relics of at least two martyrs must be enclosed in the altar stone; relics of other saints may be added. The martyrs died for the love of God; it is fitting that love unto death should be close to the mystery of love. However, the essential factor in the martyr is not the endurance of death as such, but his love unto the shedding of his blood. Many other saints loved God with an equal love and would have gladly laid down their lives for Christ, had they had the occasion for it. Therefore, relics of saints, not martyrs, are also put



*The priest recites the Introit—an entrance hymn  
—says the Kyrie Eleison alternately with his  
servants, and intones the Gloria in Excelsis*



into the altar stone. Such love can also be ours; it should be the object of our desires and efforts. Such love infallibly secures forgiveness and is the surest protection against sin. We can become martyrs, if not of blood then of love, through the slow and continuous spending of life and energy in the service of God. St. John Chrysostom says, "There is with us the most merciful God, who will grant to them that long for Him either martyrdom, or, without a martyr's death, the divine reward of the saints."

## 5. HAVE MERCY

The climax of the prayers for forgiveness is reached in the heart-stirring Kyrie eleison. The cry for mercy is addressed three times to each of the three divine Persons, and in this threefold repetition we can easily see the particular relations which we attribute to the three divine Persons in our regard, that is, the special gifts and blessings which we have received or hope to receive from them. These petitions, therefore, also throw more light on the injustice and malice of sin, arouse more profound sorrow, and enkindle stronger hope and love.

*Lord, have mercy!*

I address myself to the first Person of the most Blessed Trinity. He is my Creator. All that I am and all that I have, in body and soul, is His gift. All my faculties of body and soul, therefore, must be used according to His will. In sin I have refused to do so; I have abused

His gifts to offend Him. My Creator is also my Father, for He has created me according to His image and likeness, and with fatherly love He has provided for all my needs. But in sin I have proved myself to be an ungrateful child that left the happiness of the paternal home and sought his happiness in moral degradation. Yet, this heavenly Father has not ceased to love me. Like the father of the prodigal He is waiting for my return, and longing for the moment when He can clasp me again to His Father's bosom. For He is and must be of necessity also man's last end. He has created us for Himself, and restless is our heart unless it rests in Him. Eternal happiness in heaven is eternal rest in God. God is the all-important and all-decisive end of life; all other ends must be subordinated to it. To miss this end means to be lost forever, eternally unhappy. Lord, have mercy! Let not the work of Thy hands be lost forever; let not Thy child be forever separated from the Father; let not him, whom Thou hast created to be happy with and in Thee forever in the heavenly kingdom, be among those cursed ones condemned to that eternal fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

*Christ, have mercy!*

Christ is our Redeemer. "You know that you were redeemed . . . not with perishable things, with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." (I Peter 1:18) So wonderfully rich in blessings is this redemption that holy Church on Holy Saturday night sings of the "blessed guilt" that has brought us so great and so good

a Redeemer. Yet, in sin we reject this good Redeemer and His blessings, and, as far as lies in us, crucify Him again. Having redeemed us, Jesus became our King and Leader, that having died to sin we might follow in His steps, learn of Him who is meek and humble of heart and live to justice. However, through sin we have deserted Him and joined His enemies. Because He is our Savior and King, He is also our Judge; He is divinely competent to act as such. He knows all things and cannot be deceived; He is all-just and with Him there is no acceptance of persons; He is all-powerful and there is no power on earth or in hell that could interfere with the execution of His sentence. Jesus Himself has described in grand style His coming for judgment and made known to us the final sentence, "Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:34ff) Through sin I recklessly exposed myself to the sentence of eternal damnation. But:

Thou, who Mary didst forgive  
And who badst the robber live,  
Hope to me dost also give.

*Lord, have mercy!*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, for the charity of God is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given us. He has made us children of God, when we were born again of the water and the

Holy Spirit in baptism. We were made partakers in the divine life, and as Consoler and Comforter He continually assists us with His light, inspiration, strength, and consolation to further develop this life. The sanctity of the saints is the work of the Holy Spirit. And what this Spirit of love has begun, He will also bring to perfection in eternity. The grace of perseverance is His special gift. And what will be the final consummation of His work? "Eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him." (I Corinthians 2:9) Faith shall pass into vision, "We shall be like to Him, for we shall see him just as he is." (I John 3:2) Hope will enter upon the possession of all things that had been promised us and for which we prayed and worked. Love enters its final stage in the beatific vision. At last, on the day of the Last Judgment, the glory of the soul shall be communicated also to the body, for "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead, will also bring to life your mortal bodies because of the Spirit who dwells in you." (Romans 8:11) If we consider sin in this light it must appear to us as criminal blindness, basest ingratitude, incomprehensible folly. However, the love of the Holy Spirit is infinite. He calls to repentance, and, as long as life lasts, offers grace and forgiveness, and so also the greatest sinner has reason to pray:

Here Thy grace and virtue send,  
Grand salvation in the end  
And in heaven felicity.

## II

### From the Gloria to the Credo

**C**ONSIDERATION of the awful malice of sin and its consequences has confirmed our determination to break with it definitely and irrevocably. We want to follow Christ, our Leader, with the sentiments expressed by David's faithful friend, "As the Lord liveth and as my lord, the king liveth: in whatever place thou shalt be, my lord, O king, either in death or in life, there will thy servant be." (II Kings 15:21) Henceforth we want to follow Christ, be true Christians. How we are to follow Him is shown in the Gloria, the Epistle, and the Gospel. To reflections on these parts of the Mass we add prayer for grace since without grace we can do nothing.



## 1. GLORIA

**T**HE GLORIA begins with a summary statement of the Christian's program of life and its principal features. There follow three petitions to Jesus, the Lamb of God, and three motives because of which we hope to see the petitions granted.

*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will.*

This is the message of the angels during that silent, holy Christmas night. No clearer statement could be given of the purpose for which the Son of God came into the world. So it is our task to give glory to God; it is the only way to secure for ourselves the peace of Christ.

*We praise Thee; we bless Thee; we adore Thee; we glorify Thee; we give thanks to Thee because of Thy great glory, O Lord, God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty, O Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son.*

Praise is the first reaction of the believing heart as we behold the grandeur of God's works surrounding us, "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the works of His hands." (Psalm 18:1) On earth mountains and valleys, lakes and rivers, fields and forests, flowers and trees, birds in the air

and fishes in the water, and all the living and moving things on the face of the earth, all declare the wonderful wisdom and power of God. Immeasurably greater yet are the works of God in the economy of our salvation: the Incarnation and Passion, the Blessed Eucharist, the indwelling of God in the soul of the just. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God." (Romans 11:33) Since all these works of God are meant for our salvation, we cannot but bless Him as our greatest benefactor. We recognize Him as the almighty Creator, as God, whom we must adore and, through humble submission to His will and faithful service, glorify. And since the manifestation of His wisdom and power in the universe and in His works for men impress upon us His majesty and love, and prompt us to render Him loyal service, we thank Him for the lessons and the inspiration of His glory.

*O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Who takest away the sins of the world, accept our prayer. Who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.*

Sin is the only obstacle to the loving designs of our Savior. May He, the Lamb of God, that has taken away the sins of the world, grant us forgiveness and accept our prayer for unwavering loyalty in His service. Loving service is the only way to Him, sitting at the right hand of the Father. Therefore, "Let us mind the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth." (Colossians 3:1ff)

*For Thou alone art holy, Thou alone art Lord,  
Thou alone the highest, O Jesus Christ.*

The preceding petitions are prayers for sinlessness, a virtuous life according to the will of Christ, holiness and heaven. Jesus has the power to grant all these petitions. He is the Holy One, the brightness of His Father's glory and the image of His substance; He is the author and source of all grace that renders possible the practice of virtue. He is the abyss of all virtues, and therefore the model for all holiness. Men may reach astounding heights of sanctity, as exemplified in the Blessed Mother of Jesus and the saints, but, above them all stands Jesus in unapproachable distance. He is the highest and therefore can lift us up, no matter how high may be our aspirations in the spiritual life.

The Gloria is like a beacon light showing us the way to the goal of our life. We must walk in this light. "O almighty God, we beseech Thee, grant us, who are enlightened by the new light of Thy Word made flesh, that the light which shines in our minds may be reflected in our works." (Collect, second Mass of Christmas) Thus we will give glory to Christ our Lord and Savior,

*Together with the Holy Spirit in the glory of the Father."*

## 2. PRAYER

The celebration of holy Mass proceeds amid prayer. At repeated times the prayers of the Mass are preceded by the Dominus vobiscum, begun with the Oremus, and



*The priest recites the Collect, the chief prayer of the day in which are gathered the petitions of priest and people*



closed with a reference to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Mediator. All these features have a definite, practical significance.

#### PRIEST AND PEOPLE

Eight times during the Mass do priest and people pray for one another explicitly. The priest says, "Dominus vobiscum—The Lord be with you," and the people, usually through the server or the choir, reply, "Et cum spiritu tuo—and with your spirit, i.e., and with you." The tremendous mystery that will be enacted upon the altar calls for concentration of mind. God must fill the minds and hearts of the faithful assisting to the exclusion of all earthly thoughts; their own interests, temporal and eternal, will be most deeply affected by what is going on at the altar. For the priest himself, the manner in which he says Mass is a matter of life or death. He stands at the altar as another Christ; let him also act as such. This is precisely the meaning of the answer of the people: "And with you." May the Lord fill also your mind and heart, may He animate your priestly spirit, stir up the grace that is in you through the imposition of the bishop's hands. This is an excellent opportunity for the people to pray for their priests. If the priest at the altar is not such as he ought to be, may the Lord be with him, so that he may become a better priest and realize more fully his obligation to strive after holiness. If he is a good and holy priest, let the faithful pray that he may persevere and increase ever more in priestly perfection. Good priests are an incalculable blessing for the people and the faithful

ought to show their interest and gratitude by praying for their priests.

#### LITURGICAL PRAYER

Oremus, let us pray, is an invitation to the people to join in the prayers of the priest. The faithful too have a share in the offering of the holy Sacrifice, as stated in Mediator Dei, "Now the faithful participate in the oblation . . . after their own fashion and in a twofold manner, namely because they not only offer the sacrifice through the hands of the priest, but also to a certain extent in union with him . . . the people unite their hearts in praise, impetration, expiation and thanksgiving with the prayers or intentions of the priest, even of the divine High Priest Himself, so that in the one and same offering of the Victim and according to a visible sacerdotal rite, they may be presented to God the Father." The faithful will join the more readily in these prayers of the Mass if they consider the excellence of liturgical prayer.

Liturgical prayer is the prayer of many. Unity makes strong. Many threads make a strong rope, many drops a mighty river, many soldiers a powerful army. So the prayer of many multiplies the praise and thanksgiving, the power of atonement and the efficacy of petitions, addressed to God during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Prayers of the Mass are, moreover, prayers of Christ and the Church. Christ, always making intercession for us in heaven, prays on earth through the Church, and that most eminently at Holy Mass, in which He re-enacts in an unbloody manner His bloody

sacrifice. The part which Christ holds in these prayers is impressed upon the faithful by their conclusion, which always refers to Him as Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Lord, who together with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. The Father cannot deny what is asked of Him in the name of His well beloved Son; the Son is Lord and Himself can grant our petitions; the Holy Spirit sees in the gifts granted by Father and Son the outpouring of His love bringing ever closer the consummation of the eternal decrees of God: the everlasting kingdom of God in heavenly glory.

Liturgical prayer by its very nature is the most perfect prayer. The wonderful forms, which holy Church has given her prayers, add to their excellence and make them so much the more appealing. Well, then, Oremus—let us pray.

### 3. THE EPISTLE

The program of the Christian life, laid down in its broad outlines in the Gloria, receives official interpretation in the Epistle. Here divinely inspired teachers speak to us. The work of these sacred writers has been taken over by the Catholic Church, founded by Christ for the purpose of teaching all nations and guiding them along the ways of salvation. But the faithful must cooperate. As St. Gregory the Great says, "We have departed from our homeland by pride and disobedience, by seeking the things that strike the eye, by tasting



the forbidden fruit; hence, it needs must be that we return to it by sorrow and obedience, by despising externals and subduing the desires of the flesh." (Fourth Sunday within the octave of Epiphany) The significance of the Epistle for the Christian life is aptly characterized by its very names and by some features connected with its reading.

Epistle means letter. The sacred writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and so the Epistle is a letter sent by God to His children on earth. It brings good news about our heavenly home, words of instruction, encouragement, and warning, and the promise of help. Children far away from home are glad when they receive a letter from home and eagerly read it. Such would be the attitude of the faithful towards the Epistle, if they with living faith saw in it a letter from their heavenly home. The Epistle is also called lesson or reading, something that must be read and studied. Interest in reading and studying a subject is proportionate to the advantages expected from its knowledge. No human knowledge could ever be as useful to us as the divine lessons given us in the Epistle.

In the Epistles of St. Paul the faithful are commonly addressed as "Brethren." So we are not strangers, whose presence would be merely tolerated, but we are the brothers and sisters of Christ, children of God. Men with worldly ambitions seek admission into select society; association with distinguished men and women means much for their advancement. No human associations can compare with the nobility and the advantages of associating with children of God and saints of heaven. "Dearly Beloved" is the address used in the Epistles



*The priest reads the Epistle, the lesson taken from  
the Bible, the letter sent by God to His children*



taken from the writings of Sts. Peter, James, and John. So we are the beloved of God and the Church. But where love is, there is also the desire to help. God and the saints are ready to help us, because they long for our salvation and company in heaven.

While the priest reads the Epistle he lays his hands upon the missal. This is a beautiful symbol of our readiness to grasp the hand of the Church and to follow her guidance. The teaching of the Church is not a lofty theory or interesting story for our entertainment; it is a call to action and implies tremendous consequences, for, "Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven shall enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 7:21)

The response at the end of the Epistle is "Deo gratias," Thanks be to God. Gratitude implies appreciation and guarantees good use of the gifts received. Knowledge of religion is the most noble and most necessary knowledge, yet it is little appreciated among men. Men will pay heavily for cultural and scientific education, but will think that they do God a favor, if they accept religious instruction. God does not expect material remuneration for the knowledge He offers, but He expects gratitude; gratitude which consists not in mere words, but in acting according to this knowledge. "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22)

#### 4. THE GOSPEL

The Gospel gives us the life story of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world. It is not fiction; it is all truth and reality. No other life story can compare with it in grandeur and beauty, in fruitfulness and significance for time and eternity. Jesus is our Savior and we must accept Him as such, for there is no other name given to men by which we could be saved. But Jesus does not expect blind and unreasonable faith. He proves Himself to be the almighty God who can save the world, the all-loving God who longs for men's salvation. All His miracles and teaching serve this purpose. Water is changed into wine by His mere will. He lays His hands upon the sick and they are healed, they touch His garments and feel the effect of His power; His word heals even those who are not present. He commands the winds and the waves and there follows a great calm; He blesses the loaves and they multiply while they are distributed. He raises the dead to life; He allows Himself to be crucified, but rises from the tomb in immortal glory. Truly, this man is the Son of God. Divine power stands in the service of divine love. All miracles of our Lord are wrought in behalf of poor and suffering mankind. It is this love that draws all hearts to Him. He invites all who labor and are burdened to come to Him; with Him they will find rest for their souls. Love will make sweet His burden and light His yoke. The Savior's love goes out in a special manner to the poorest of the poor, the sinners; words of forgiving love flow from His lips when He speaks



*The priest reads the Gospel of the day, “the heaven-drawn pen-picture of Christ, the Living God”*





to them. He does not condemn the adulteress, nor withdraw His feet from being anointed by a sinful woman; He offers forgiveness to Judas, has a look of tender pity for Peter, the promise of paradise for the repentant thief.

Such is the life of Him of whom the Gospel speaks. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and, as St. Hilarion says, there is nothing more dangerous for the world than not to know Christ. What the attitude of the Christian should be toward the Gospel is pointed out in the prayers and ceremonies which precede, accompany, and follow the reading of the Gospel. Before reading the Gospel, standing in the middle of the altar and making a profound inclination, the priest prays:

*Cleanse my heart and my lips, O God almighty, Thou who hast cleansed the lips of the prophet Isaias with a burning coal; vouchsafe so to cleanse me in Thy gracious mercy, that I may be able to announce Thy holy Gospel in a worthy manner. . . . The Lord be in my heart and upon my lips, that I may announce His Gospel with dignity and competence.*

The first part of this prayer is based on the vision of God related in the sixth chapter of the prophet Isaias. The prophet considers himself a man of unclean lips, not worthy to be a messenger of God. Only after his lips have been touched by an angel with a burning coal taken from the altar does he feel confident to accept the mission. How pure and holy must be the lips that announce the words and works of our Savior Jesus Christ. But not only priests are the heralds of the word of Christ; all the faithful are to spread the knowledge of Christ in



a world that to such a large extent is hostile to Christ. Their words, however, will produce little effect unless they are inspired by sincere love and supported by blameless lives.

Before reading the Gospel the priest makes the sign of the cross on the missal, and then he signs himself with the sign of the cross on the forehead, mouth, and breast. The faithful do the same. The meaning to be conveyed by this act is that the Gospel is the word of the cross, the word of Christ, who died on the cross and accepts as His disciples only those who are willing to carry the cross after Him. Therefore, the cross must be in our minds so that we may judge all the affairs of this world in the light of the cross; it must be in our mouths, courageously professing our love and loyalty to the Crucified; in our hearts, ready to live and to die for Him. We declare our readiness to accept these conditions and to devote our lives to the Crucified by answering at the beginning of the Gospel, "*Glory be to Thee, O Lord,*" and at the end, "*Praise be to Thee, O Christ.*" The holy lives of the faithful shall be the glory of Christ. The faithful stand while the Gospel is read. This is a sign of reverence, but also of our determination to follow Christ and to stand by Him in life and in death.

In the Credo that follows we give renewed expression to our faith, hope, love, and loyalty. After all the preceding reflections our sentiments should be those of St. Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast words of eternal life and we have come to believe and to know that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God." (John 6:70)



*The priest recites the Creed, the flag of his Faith,  
his Hope, his Love, his loyalty*



### III

## From the Offertory to the Canon

THE very idea of sacrifice implies that we offer to God a visible gift in order to acknowledge Him as our Creator and Giver of all things we possess, and to worship Him as our Lord and Master. In the present order of things there is but one sacrifice which is accepted by God as such, and that is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is in substance identical with the sacrifice of the cross, since the priest and victim in both are the same, Jesus Christ, and differs from it only in the manner of being offered. Even though Jesus is visible neither in His divinity nor humanity, nevertheless the appearances of bread and wine under which He is present are visible. We have furnished the bread and wine, they are our sacrificial gifts; however, their oblation is not the sacrifice. They will be changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ and be the medium by which Jesus offers Himself in sacrifice. Furnishing the sacrificial elements we express our desire to have a share in this sacrifice and to offer ourselves through Him and in Him. These ideas are admirably expressed and developed in the prayers and ceremonies of this part of the Mass.

## 1. OBLATION OF THE HOST

**A**CCEPT, *holy Father, almighty and eternal God, this spotless host which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer to Thee, my living and true God...*

The bread which is used for the Holy Sacrifice is called host. The word is derived from the Latin *hostia*, victim, which was the name for the animal slaughtered in a bloody sacrifice. We are therefore reminded of our Savior's bloody sacrifice, of which Holy Mass is the unbloody re-enactment. However, when we speak of the host we think in the first place of the altar bread that will be changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ; after the consecration we call it the sacred host. As such it is also the bread of life which we receive in Holy Communion. Natural bread sustains our natural life by being changed into our substance; Holy Communion is the food for our supernatural life, not however by being changed into our substance, but by making us partakers in the divine life.

Now we offer this host to the living God; living, because continually active in our behalf. He is active in every breath of the mouth and every beat of the heart, in every act of seeing, hearing, and speaking, in every movement of hands and feet, in everything that in one way or other serves the sustenance of our lives; nothing could exist without this activity of God.



*The priest offers the bread which is to be  
transubstantiated into the Body of Christ*



By this energizing and life-giving activity God proves Himself to be the true God; the gods and goddesses of the pagans have neither life nor activity, being but fictions of the mind. And thus we offer sacrifice to the almighty Father as the author of all life; to the eternal Father, who from all eternity called us to life everlasting in His beloved Son, our Savior; to the holy Father who wants us to be His holy children; to the living God who wants us to live for Him; to the true God who must be served in spirit and in truth, not by eye service but in sincerity of heart.

*For my innumerable sins, offenses, and negligences, for all here present, and for all the faithful Christians, living and dead, that it may avail to me and to them unto salvation in life everlasting.*

Holy Mass is the sacrifice of atonement, Jesus the Victim of sin, the propitiation for our sins, our peace and reconciliation. Where sin has abounded, grace has abounded more. In Holy Mass we have atonement full and adequate for our individual sins, for all those offenses by which we have become the cause or occasion of other men's sins, for all our omissions and negligences in the service of God. It remains for us to make use of these treasures of atonement for ourselves and for the world. We can do it by making the toil and labor of our vocational duties and all other hardships that may fall to our lot part and parcel of our Mass offering. This is strongly suggested by the very choice of the sacrificial element of bread. Does it not remind us of the sentence pronounced on our first parents in Paradise that, in punishment of their sin, they would



have to eat their daily bread in the sweat of their faces? But as Jesus labored and died for the salvation of all men, let us think in our daily atonement not only of ourselves but of all mankind, since it is the ardent desire of the Savior's sacred Heart that all men should be saved.

## 2. WINE AND WATER

After the oblation of the host the priest pours wine into the chalice, adding a few drops of water. It is believed that was done also by Jesus at the Last Supper. The wine symbolizes the divine, the water the human nature, and the mixing of wine and water recalls the mysteries, by which human nature, created in wonderful dignity, was restored more wonderful after the Fall.

*O God, who didst create human nature in wonderful dignity and even more wonderfully hast renewed it...*

Man is the masterpiece of creation, a compendium so to say of all created orders, material as well as spiritual. As St. Gregory the Great says in his homily for the feast of the Ascension, man has something in common with all orders of created beings; with lifeless matter he has in common existence, life with plants, sensation with animals; like the angels he is endowed with a mind and will, and through grace he even shares in the divine life. Before the Fall these perfections of human nature were further enhanced by the so-called preternatural gifts; immortality of the body, freedom from inordinate

passions, a penetrating mind and powerful will, undisturbed happiness. This marvelous state of man came to an end through sin. Grace and the preternatural gifts were lost, evil concupiscence, that is, the rebellion of the material nature in man against the spiritual was unleashed.

Through Jesus Christ the damage done by sin was fully repaired, and human nature restored to a dignity even more excellent than before sin. We are again sharing in the divine life through sanctifying grace and are placed into another paradise more beautiful than the first. It is the Catholic Church. Here grows the tree of life, the cross bearing the bread of life, here flow the rivers of grace in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the sacraments. The original Paradise with all its enchanting beauty and happiness had no Mass, no Holy Communion, no tabernacle harboring the God-man. True, the preternatural gifts have not as yet been restored to us, but they will be ours in even greater perfection in heavenly life. All this wonderful change has been accomplished through the mysteries symbolized by the mixing of wine and water.

*Grant us by the mystery of this wine and water to be partakers in the divine nature of Him who deigned to assume our human nature, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.*

A mystery is the Incarnation, the assumption of human nature by the Son of God and our Savior. Without ceasing to be what He was, He begins to be what

He was not; the God-man, God, capable of suffering and dying for our salvation. This is a tremendous mystery of which St. Leo the Great says, "Unless faith accepts it, language cannot explain how both natures have united in one Person." The Son of God became man "for us and our salvation," as the Nicene Creed puts it. It is the mystery of God dying for men that men might live. "One of the soldiers opened His side with a lance and immediately there came out blood and water." (John 19:34) From this His pierced heart He now offers us the blood of redemption and the water of our sanctification. The mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption find their consummation in the mystery of grace, that marvelous participation of the soul in the life of God, its incorporation into the God-man. This mystery is well illustrated by the mixing of wine and water. No chemical change is effected by this mixing; the wine remains wine and the water remains water. But where is the water? It cannot be seen nor tasted; it shares in the appearance and taste of wine. So does the soul, united with God through grace, remain a human soul; neither is the divine substance changed into the human substance. Yet, there is such an intimate union between God and the soul that Jesus compares it to the union of stem and branches in the vine, and St. Paul can say, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2:20) There can be no grander conception of the dignity of man, no higher exaltation of his nature, than that spoken of in this prayer. As St. Augustine puts it, God has become man, that man might become divine. Clearly, the application of this truth to life means that it must be the Christian's



*The priest offers the wine to be transubstantiated  
into the Blood of Christ*



ambition first and foremost," to be found in the form of Him, in whom our nature has been united with God." (Secret, first Mass of Christmas)

### 3. THE CHALICE OF SALVATION

The wine mixed with a few drops of water will be changed at the Consecration into the blood of Christ that was shed for us on the cross. For this reason the chalice is called the chalice of salvation.

*We offer to Thee, O Lord, the chalice of our salvation, beseeching Thy clemency that it may ascend before Thy divine majesty with the odor of sweetness, for our salvation and that of the whole world.*

Bread and wine are offered separately, and separately they will also be consecrated. Thus we are reminded of the separation of the body and blood of Jesus in His Passion and Death. His was a violent death, and the violent shedding of His blood is the most appropriate atonement for sin. Nothing could bring home to us more impressively the violent separation of the soul from God in sin. What must be the malice of sin if God thus punishes it; God, who is infinitely just and cannot punish sin more severely than it deserves. If mortal sin in each case were punished with immediate violent death, few sins would be committed.

The choice of wine as a sacrificial element also

conveys a practical lesson. Wine is an intoxicating beverage; the intemperate use of wine deprives a man of the use of reason and makes him act foolishly. So is sin an intoxication caused by the intemperate use of creatures, the greatest folly of which man is capable. Is it not incomprehensible folly to rise in rebellion against the almighty God and expose oneself to the danger of eternal damnation for a low and transitory pleasure?

Against this intoxication of sin stands the intoxication of love by which sin is atoned. To be drunk with love is a common figure of speech. The love of Christ in His Passion and Death was a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles. The folly of love atoned for the folly of sin. Indeed, this is an astounding manifestation of divine love and "the sensual man does not perceive the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him." (I Corinthians 2:14)

On the other hand, wine is one of the blessings which God promised to His people in the Old Testament in reward for faithful service. The psalmist gratefully speaks of its effect, "that wine may cheer the heart of men." (Psalm 103:15) Did not our Lord work His first miracle by changing water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana to make His friends and their guests happy and cheerful? No less an authority than the Angelic Doctor finds in the exhilarating effects of the moderate use of wine the reason why it is the proper matter for the Eucharist, "Wine from the grape is more suited to express the effect of the sacrament, which is spiritual joy." The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Holy Communion, and the presence of Jesus in the

tabernacle are ever flowing fountains of spiritual joy and peace, such as the world cannot give. And the joy of the Christian heart in this life will in due time blossom forth into the joy of life everlasting.

Wine is the product of crushed grapes and this crushing of the grapes is in holy Scripture the symbol of humiliation, sorrow, and suffering. Pride, the root of all sins, must be crushed and there is nothing that does it more thoroughly than suffering and humiliation. It is something like a violent death inflicted upon self-love, and its patient endurance is folly in the eyes of the world. We need more of the intoxication of divine love in order to love sufferings and humiliation, which so often accompany the loyal service of Christ. For such love we pray in the words of St. Ignatius, "Blood of Christ, inebriate me." The blood that will be in the chalice is the wine, that enraptures the soul with the folly of divine love. From hearts filled with such love this oblation of the chalice will ascend before the throne of God with an odor of sweetness.

#### 4. HUMBLE AND CONTRITE

"In order that the oblation by which the faithful offer the divine Victim in this sacrifice to the heavenly Father may have full effect, it is necessary that the people add something else, namely, the offering of themselves as a victim." (Mediator Dei) Precisely this is the object of the prayer which follows the oblation of the sacrificial gifts.



*In the spirit of humility and with a contrite heart may we be received by Thee, O Lord.*

God is truth and only truth can please Him. Reason and faith tell us that our life's task is to glorify God by the use of His gifts according to His will. This we have not done. We have used God's gifts against His will; we have sinned. God's will aims at our sanctification, our exaltation, and eternal happiness; acting against the will of God we have, therefore, degraded ourselves and acted against our best interests. With all the wisdom and judgment of which we boasted, we have acted recklessly, foolishly, and found it out to our regret. We sought pleasure and found pain, we sought rest and found labor, we sought peace and were tortured by qualms of conscience. Disillusioned we acknowledge our mistake; we feel sorry, humbled, crushed. But a humble and contrite heart God will not reject.

*And may our sacrifice be so offered in Thy sight today, that it may be pleasing to Thee, Lord, God.*

This renewed oblation of ourselves will have value only if it is sincere and offers the complete, unconditional, and permanent surrender of our will to God. There must be no exception or reservation, no division in our love and loyalty. It will not do to act as a servant of God in church and in religious exercises, and follow the principles of an unchristian philosophy in work and business, in family and social relations, in worldly ambitions and pursuits. The completeness of our surrender to God implies that it be unconditional.

Ever so often we attach, even though only implicitly, conditions to our service of God. We want to work for Him but only in the place of our choice, in the manner that appeals to us, in the company of such as are agreeable to us. We are willing to carry the cross provided it is not too heavy, to do penance provided it does not hurt. We forget that the very idea of cross and penance is pain and discomfort; spiritual anesthetics have not as yet been invented. And, lastly, our surrender to God must be permanent, definite, and final, for the simple reason that our fundamental relation to God as our Creator, Lord, and last end can never change. Hence our whole life, all our work, all our crosses must be included in the sacrifice offered to God; not one particular act or day, but the long-drawn-out series of days and months and years which He may grant us. Because of the fickleness of our nature it is necessary that we renew these sentiments again and again, and unite ourselves with the divine Victim, who at the end of His life could say that He had accomplished the task which His Father had given Him to do.

Acting in harmony with the sentiments expressed in this little prayer will be a source of incalculable blessings. There will be consistency in our lives, trustful submission to God's holy will, daily growth in the love of God and heavenly riches, profound and undisturbed peace. Hours and days with all their toil and labor, their hopes and disappointments, their sorrows and joys, are drawn into the sanctifying contact with the Holy Sacrifice; life becomes a continuous self-immolation which cannot but be pleasing to God.

## 5. BLESSED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Bread and wine have been blessed and prepared for their high purpose; in their offering was included the oblation of ourselves. There follows now a striking invocation of the Holy Spirit that He may bless this sacrifice, which is said to have been prepared for His holy name.

*Come, Sanctifier, almighty and eternal God.*

To sanctify is to dedicate to God, to make sacred and pleasing to God, to unite with God. We attribute all sanctification to the Holy Spirit, because He unites Father and Son in His eternal love. And so we find the Holy Spirit active in the work of our redemption, which has for its purpose the reconciliation of men with God. He acts as Sanctifier in the life of Jesus our Savior as well as in the life of the redeemed. It is of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is conceived by the Blessed Virgin Mary, and therefore, "The Holy One to be born shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35) Again, it was when the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus at His baptism, dedicating Him to His public ministry, that the voice of the Father was heard, "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22) And, in the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus Himself testified that the Holy Spirit was upon Him, anointing and equipping Him for His mission. As to the Christian who is incorporated into Christ's mystical body and shares in His life, the Holy Spirit plays a most prom-

inent part. It is through water and the Holy Spirit that we are born again and made partakers in the life and holiness of God; the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit is active in all other sacraments, particularly in the sacrament of penance and in Holy Communion, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mother. Is it not logical that we should invoke the Holy Spirit to bless this bread and wine and us, in order to prepare us for a more perfect and fruitful participation in the Holy Sacrifice?

*And bless this sacrifice.*

This blessing of the Holy Spirit will definitely dedicate the sacrificial elements to their sacred purpose; it will bestow upon them mysterious power by which after the Consecration they will be able to arouse in the faithful sentiments of faith and hope, a tender love for Jesus, and an ardent desire for the abundance of His gifts. As to ourselves this blessing will secure greater purity of conscience, more light to understand what we are doing, a more profound appreciation and love for the Holy Sacrifice.

*Which has been prepared for Thy holy name.*

Holy Mass is the sacrifice of divine love. Yet, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, and His love celebrates its greatest triumph in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In Holy Mass Jesus continues His mission of love. Through Holy Mass He is sacramentally present in our midst and to the end of time will extend to men His loving invitation, "Come to me, all you who labor and are

burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you...and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light." (Matthew 11:28) Through Holy Mass we ourselves are drawn into the Savior's mission of love. Here we are strengthened to love God with our whole heart and with all our strength, to render Him the daily homage of our adoration and service, of thanksgiving and atonement. Here we learn true love of our neighbor, seeing how Jesus has loved men and laid down His life for them. Those whom He has loved unto death surely deserve our love. The great works of the saints in behalf of men, their apostolic zeal, their self-forgetting service of the poor and needy, their silent prayer and self-immolation in the austerities of cloistered life, all draw their inspiration from this sacrifice of love.

Holy Mass, as it is the greatest manifestation of God's love for men, so it is also His most effective glorification. It is in every way the triumph of divine love. Therefore, Holy Mass must be said to be prepared for the glory of the Holy Spirit's name; His name is Love.

## 6. AMONG THE INNOCENT

The priest now washes his hands, reciting at the same time the twenty-fifth Psalm. This psalm may have been composed by David at about the same time as the forty-second Psalm that was recited at the beginning of the Mass. At all events, it is the prayer of one greatly troubled by malicious enemies. The psalm-



*The priest washes his finger-tips—a symbol of the purity of soul required for offering the Sacrifice*



ist protests that he has not provoked the trouble; suffering unjustly, he feels so much the more drawn to God's sanctuary and its peace. The temporary success of his enemies does not shake his confidence in God. The thought of their ultimate punishment and his vindication confirms him in his determination to follow the straight path of the commandments, and by word and example to lead the people along the same road. These should be our sentiments as we proceed with the sacred action.

*I will wash my hands among the innocent.*

Hands are the symbol of work; the washing of hands symbolizes the avoidance of evil and the consecration of our work to God. Union with Jesus in His Holy Sacrifice calls for sinlessness. It would be an affront to the divine High Priest and in glaring contrast to the Sacrifice of atonement, if we were not determined to lead sinless lives. There can be no partaking in the fruits of the Sacrifice of atonement, where there is attachment to sin and unchristian principles.

*I will be around Thy altar, O Lord, that I may hear the voice of praise and tell of all Thy wondrous works.*

I will press close to the altar and with the eyes of faith look upon the mysteries enacted there. I will listen and endeavor to understand the prayers and hymns of praise that fill the house of God, those divinely inspired texts and stirring melodies, that have echoed through the churches of the New Testament from the beginning, and will continue to the end of time, then



to be taken up and continued for all eternity by the blessed in heaven. Having seen and heard I will spread abroad the wondrous works of God. Of what the heart is full, the mouth flows over.

*I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwells.*

The essential beauty of the house of God is that it is the dwelling place of God. If we love God we will seek to be in His presence, not only when duty compels us to be there, but as often as time and circumstances allow. This divine beauty of the house of God must be surrounded by created beauty. All that human art and wealth can furnish should be there; the beauty of architecture and ornamentation, of vestments and vessels, the splendor of ceremonies and sacred chants. Such beauty will be a faint reflection of the heavenly holy of holies; it cannot fail to attract even non-Catholics to the Church.

*Take not away my soul, O Lord, with the wicked, nor my life with the men of blood, in whose hands are iniquities and whose right hand is filled with gifts.*

The dreadful possibility that we might yield to sin inspires this petition. Man is weak; even the apostles were warned to watch and to pray lest they fall into temptation. The punishment of the wicked and the men of blood will be terrible. But in a certain sense all men are men of blood, since all have contributed to the death of Christ by their sins; many have done so by their oppression and exploitation of the poor. May God preserve us from sin and its punishment.

*As for me, I follow the way of innocence; redeem me and have mercy on me. I keep my foot on the straight way. In the assemblies of men I will bless Thee, O Lord.*

Following in the footsteps of our Savior we follow the straight way and stand on firm ground, which does not give way and on which we do not slip. Out of gratitude for all these blessings I will spread the knowledge of God among men, that they too may know and serve Him and thus save their souls. To do this on a large scale by speaking in the assemblies of men is the privilege of only a few. However, all can spread the knowledge of Christian principles and lead men to God and His Church in the daily contacts with their fellowmen by their words, but above all by their example of Christian living.

Christ, our God and Savior, must rule in the world, in public and private life, in politics and business and education. We are still far from this ideal state of things, and we freely dedicate ourselves anew to work for its realization in the surroundings in which God has placed us. Every Holy Mass, at which we assist in the spirit of this beautiful psalm, will ratify and strengthen this dedication through union with Jesus in the mystery of His body and blood.

## 7. COMMEMORATION, HONOR, SALVATION

In the prayer following the washing of hands we find a summary statement of the objects of the Holy

**Sacrifice:** Homage to the three divine Persons, commemoration of the mysteries of our salvation, honor for the saints, salvation for the faithful.

*Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation which we offer up to Thee.*

Since there is but one God, one divine nature, all three divine Persons were active in the work of our redemption. The Father gave us His only-begotten Son, "O wondrous condescension of Thy kindness towards us, O tenderness of love surpassing understanding, that to save a slave Thou gavest up the Son." The Son assumed human nature and in this nature suffered and died for our salvation. The Holy Spirit gave us the sacred humanity of our Savior, anointing and equipping Him for His mission, and brings the work of redemption to its completion by the sanctification of souls. Hence, this explicit oblation prayer addressed to the Holy Trinity.

*In memory of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

St. Paul speaking of the Last Supper records these words of our Lord, "As often as you shall eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until He come." (I Corinthians 11:26) The memory of the Passion stands in the foreground of Holy Mass, since it is the unbloody re-enactment of His bloody sacrifice. However, Holy Mass is not a mere commemoration of the Passion as is a passion play; it is real action, with Christ personally acting as priest and victim, though doing it through the instrumentality



*In sacred silence the priest recites the Secret, a prayer  
inspired by the special day's sacrificial celebration*



of the priest. But since Jesus, having died once dies no more, and is present in His glorified state as He is now in heaven, the memory of the Passion is inseparable from the memory of His Resurrection and Ascension.

*In honor of Blessed Mary, ever virgin, blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, of these (i.e., of the saints whose relics are in the altar) and all the saints.*

The saints are the glorious fruits of Christ's redeeming death; it behooves us to give thanks to God for their holiness and glory. The honor of the saints is our honor, their remembrance a solemn call to holiness of life.

*May it redound to their honor and to our salvation; and may they, whose memory we celebrate on earth, graciously intercede for us in heaven. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Every Holy Mass is to bring us closer to our final heavenly goal in a twofold way. In the first place, we join our divine High Priest in fulfilling the primary object of our lives, that is, to honor and adore God, to give thanks to Him, to atone for our sins. Uniting ourselves with the divine Victim we offer our lives to be spent completely in service for the glory of God. In the second place, we implore the intercession of the saints. They love us because they love Jesus who loved us unto death; they see in us their future companions and our salvation will be their delight for all eternity. Therefore, they rejoice in praying for us and helping us in many other ways. The ultimate object of their

intercession is that we too may become holy, "Be followers of us as we were followers of Christ."

The above prayer brings the Offertory proper to a close. The Orate Fratres and the so-called secret prayers which follow are prayers in support of the ideas thus far presented.

## 8. PREFACE AND SANCTUS

The Preface is the solemn entrance into the grand mysteries of the Canon, the joyous prelude which the Church intones as we set out to meet our divine High Priest in His heavenly glory. It consists of the so-called responsories and a sublime canticle of praise and thanksgiving. All is calculated to fill us with holy awe and reverence.

*Per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.—Forever and ever. Amen.*

We hear the echoes of eternity, we feel its breath. Our divine High Priest is the Eternal One, who lives and reigns in His heavenly kingdom with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

*The Lord be with you—And with you.*

If ever we need concentration of mind, it is now as we are about to witness the tremendous mystery re-enacted before our very eyes. Would it not be unbearable ingratitude, willingly to keep in our minds any other thought than that of God and His love?

*Lift up your hearts—We have lifted them up to the Lord.*

Lift up your hearts to Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father; lift them up from the cares and worries of this life, from the enticing allurements of the world to the delights of heaven, from the narrow horizons of human selfishness to the vast expanses of God's limitless love, from the treacherous instability of human friendships to the love unto death of your changeless friend.

*Let us give thanks to the Lord our God—It is meet and just.*

As the rays of the sun gather in the focus, so the rays of God's love gather in this eucharistic mystery, the memorial of all His wonderful works. Let us give thanks; but let us do so through Jesus Christ, who is our Eucharist, our thanksgiving.

*It is truly meet and just, right and profitable unto salvation, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God, through Christ our Lord.*

The tremendous mystery of the Eucharist reaches into eternity, embraces all times and all places. As we look into the past we behold the eternal love of God by which He decreed our salvation; as we turn to the future we gaze at the kingdom of glory, thrown open for the elect by the blessings of this Sacrifice. Holy Mass is the Sacrifice foretold by the prophet Malachy, that would be offered up from the rising of the sun to



its going down, the clean oblation by which the name of God would be great among the Gentiles, and the sacrifice offered to Him in every place.

*Through Him the angels adore Thy majesty, the Dominations adore, the Powers thrill with wonder.*

Jesus, though not the Savior of the angels, is also their Mediator. They now behold Him, who was shown to them in a vision to test their loyalty. As then so now they praise and adore the infinite wisdom and power of God, that has raised a created nature to such glory. Dominations are probably spirits who rule over the laws and forces of nature active throughout the universe. These laws will be suspended when the Lord of lords becomes present under the species of bread and wine. The Dominations humbly adore, bowing before the all-controlling authority of God. Powers thrill with wonder. Display of power must have a special appeal for spirits distinguished by their capacity for doing great things. The grandest display of power is found in the eucharistic mystery, power so great as to make these powerful spirits thrill with wonder and reverent awe.

*The heavens, the heavenly hosts, and the blessed Seraphim join in the celebration with jubilant accord.*

The offering of Holy Mass is a celebration, a feast for those heavenly spirits. "Wisdom has built herself a house, has mixed the wine and set the table." Here infinite wisdom has enthroned infinite love through infinite power. We do not see as yet face to face as the angels do, but we believe, rejoice, praise, and give

thanks; we wish to join them in their praises of the all-holy and merciful God, acclaim our divine High priest and welcome Him in our midst.

*Grant, we humbly pray, that united with them our voices too be given hearing as in praise and supplication we cry out: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts. The heavens and the earth are full of Thy glory, Hosanna in the highest.*

These words are taken from a vision of the prophet Isaías. The prophet beholds God sitting on a high throne, His train filling the temple. Two Seraphim are standing before Him, proclaiming throughout the heavens the holiness of God. Heaven and earth are full of His glory. The visible universe unceasingly proclaims the glory of the Creator, and in heaven angels and saints in a yet more impressive manner give testimony to the merciful love of Him to whom they owe all that they are. But the wonders of the universe and the glory of angels and saints pale into insignificance before the majesty and splendor of the eucharistic mystery.

*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*

When on Palm Sunday Jesus solemnly entered Jerusalem where a few days later He was to be crucified, crowds of people welcomed Him. They scattered palm branches on the road, spread their garments in His path, while their cries of joy rent the air, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" The same Jesus will soon be in our midst to offer the same sacrifice which He offered in

Jerusalem. We welcome Him; for us, too, He is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

He comes in the name of the Father who sent Him. Never has greater work been accomplished for the honor of God than by Jesus. Reparation full and adequate was made for the sins of the world; infinite honor was given to God by one, who, though man, was also God. He became obedient unto death, death on a cross. So He is blessed by the Father and the Holy Spirit. And blessed He is by the saints in heaven, for all of them owe their holiness and glory to Him. So He comes as the Blessed One also for us, for all those millions of men living on earth, for through Him alone can they be saved. Should we not welcome Him with holy enthusiasm and grateful love? Hosanna in the highest!

The coming of Jesus to earth in the form of a servant to die for us, and His eucharistic coming for the mystical re-enactment of His sacrifice, will be followed by His coming with power and majesty on the day of judgment. Then there will go up from the vast multitude of all the redeemed from all nations, tribes, and tongues, the last Benedictus, the thundering welcome, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

## IV

### The Canon before the Consecration

**T**HE MASS is a sacrifice, a gift to God. We now come to the heart and center of the Mass, to the very sacrifice itself, offered up to God at the Consecration. This is the whole point and purpose of the Mass—that we offer with Christ the same Sacrifice He offered on the Cross of Calvary. As Christ offered Himself, Body and Blood, to His Heavenly Father, so at Mass Christ's sacrifice is continued. Now Christ's work is accomplished in company with us, who are His faithful members.

## 1. OFFERING AND PETITION

**T**HE FIRST prayer of the Canon bears striking resemblance with the prayer said by our Lord at the Last Supper. He then renewed the oblation of His life to His heavenly Father, prayed for the apostles and for all those who upon their word would believe in Him; He prayed for unity and peace and holiness among the members of the Church. In this prayer we do the same.

*And now we humbly beseech Thee, most merciful Father, through Jesus Christ Thy Son, our Lord, that Thou wouldst accept and bless these gifts, these offerings. these holy and undefiled sacrifices.*

The bread and wine upon the altar and all the other things required for the offering of Holy Mass are personal gifts: the contributions of the faithful through their support of the Church; they symbolize the oblation of their own persons. These gifts are moreover official gifts, accepted by the Church for an official public act of worship; they are sacrificial because they are destined for the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. As sacrificial gifts they are said to be holy and undefiled. This statement had a very practical meaning for the faithful in the early times of Christianity, when pagan sacrifices were offered in great number. The offering of a gift to an idol would be a hideous

defilement of the gift, whereas its oblation to the true God sanctifies it. Idol worship in the ancient form has practically disappeared, but every sin is idol worship in one form or other. It is the worship of self through pride and vanity, the worship of the flesh through intemperance and impurity, the worship of mammon through greed and avarice. Should we have become guilty of such idol worship, this prayer reminds us of the necessity of cleansing our souls from such defilements, if we wish to be united with the divine High Priest and Victim in this Holy Sacrifice.

*Which we offer to Thee, in the first place, for Thy holy Catholic Church. Grant her in Thy mercy peace; guard, unite, and govern her throughout the world, together with Thy servant, our Pope N., and with our Bishop N., and with all who profess and propagate the Catholic and apostolic faith.*

The Church is holy; should we not be her holy members? She is Catholic; what do we do to spread the faith and to bring non-Catholics into the Church: pray, give good example, support her missionary work? Even though times of persecution belong to the most glorious of the Church, nevertheless, generally speaking, the Church will be best able to accomplish her mission in times of peace, tolerance, and freedom of religion. The Church needs peace, not only from without but also from within. National and racial prejudice, vain ambitions of individuals and groups of members of the Church have only too often in the past torn asunder the unity of the mystical body of Christ and caused untold harm. Unity makes strong. The Church

can flourish internally and externally only if the faithful are but one heart and one soul. Divine guidance will never fail the Church; in matters of faith and morals it is assured through her infallible teaching authority. Yet, there are many other things in the government of the Church, left to the prudence of ecclesiastical authorities. Human limitations and the corruption of the human heart can do much harm. Ecclesiastical authorities need the prayers of all the faithful that they may always allow themselves to be guided by the light of the Holy Spirit so as to see and to do what is best for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Then we pray for all the faithful that they may be strong and steadfast in the profession of their faith; lastly, for all those apostolic men and women, tillers of the soil, who by their labors for the conversion of pagans, heretics, and sinners, stand in the forefront of the Church Militant. Theirs is an arduous task and often heroic faith and fortitude are needed. They deserve our prayers in a very particular manner so that their labors may be blessed and soon there may be but one flock and one shepherd.

## 2. MEMENTO FOR THE LIVING

After the prayer for the whole Church follows the memento for the living. In ancient times the names of those who were to be especially remembered at the Holy Sacrifice were read aloud at this place; at the



*The priest pauses for the memento of the living,  
those for whom Holy Mass is offered*





present time the priest recalls them in silence. After this the faithful who are present are remembered, and the manner in which this is done is extraordinarily appealing.

*Remember, O Lord, Thy servants and handmaids, N. and N., and all who stand about the altar, whose faith has been tried and whose devotion is known to Thee.*

The faithful assisting at Mass are spoken of as standing about the altar. This very term takes us back to those early times, when the sacred mysteries were celebrated in the privacy of a Christian home or in the catacombs. The place was small and the faithful close to the celebrating priest, actually standing about the altar. In the catacombs those silent graves of the martyrs along the narrow passage ways spoke an eloquent language. The faithful knew what they had to expect for the profession of their faith; but they had accepted it and the following of their crucified King and Leader with all the devotion of their hearts. Their very presence in this place was evidence of their loyalty. Indeed, their faith needed no further recommendation; it had been tried and their devotion to Christ was known.

Even though not standing about the altar, the faithful must be close to priest and altar also in our days as "a holy priesthood, a chosen race, a holy nation." (I Peter 2:5) True, in many cases Christian fervor leaves much to be desired, but on the whole, the faithful have proved their faith and loyalty to Christ also in our days. They have built churches and schools to worship God and to preserve the faith of the young.

There are millions who have not conformed to the unchristian principles of a materialistic world and in many cases they have suffered discrimination, persecution, the loss of property and life because of their religion. Their faith, too, has been tried and their devotion to Christ is known.

*For whom we offer up to Thee, or, who offer up to Thee, this sacrifice of praise for themselves and all their own, to obtain the redemption of their souls, their hoped-for salvation and safety, and render their vows to Thee, the eternal God, living and true.*

The redemption of their souls had real meaning for those early Christians. They beheld all around them, and, if they were converts, had experienced in their own lives, the emptiness and moral wretchedness of the pagan world. There was no light of faith to show men the purpose of their lives, no guidance in the aberrations of pagan superstition, no encouragement to resist enslavement by the evil lusts of human passions, no hope for a blessed eternity. All this the Christians had found in the Church, and for this redemption they offered up the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. But they also remained fully aware of the weakness of human nature; they had seen others falter and fail; they realized the need of help and they found it, strength and safety, in this Sacrifice.

Conditions in our days have much in common with those prevailing in the early times of Christianity. In fact, the means employed in many cases to make the faithful give up their faith are more cunning and cruel, more inhuman and diabolical than ever before.

So much the more is it necessary for the faithful to gather around the altar and to draw courage from this Sacrifice by which the powers of hell were defeated, and to persevere “unto perfect patience and long-suffering, joyfully rendering thanks to the Father, who has made us worthy to share in the lot of the saints in light.” (Colossians 1:10) Here they will renew their faith, strengthen their hope, enkindle their love to live up to their baptismal promises and thus to render their vows to the eternal God, living and true.

### 3. IN UNION WITH THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

Startling as it may sound at first hearing, it is a truth following from Catholic doctrine that the blessed in heaven are one with us in offering the Holy Sacrifice. This prayer is proof of it; the law of prayer is the law of faith. Their merits and prayers add to our hope for an abundant share in the blessings of Holy Mass.

*This we do in communion with and honoring the memory, especially of the glorious ever virgin Mary, the Mother of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, and also of Thy blessed apostles and martyrs, Peter and Paul... and all Thy saints.*

The saints in heaven are members of Christ's mystical body in a more perfect manner than we. What Christ does as their Head, they do with Him. Jesus, though risen from the dead and dying no more, renews His sacrifice in a mystical manner, offering His sufferings and death; so do the saints offer again and again the labors and sufferings of their lives. And as

God is honored by the re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice, so He is honored by the repeated offering of the saints' labors and sufferings joined to the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The saints were members of the Church Militant and remained united with the faithful on earth in the unity of the mystical body of Christ. They became saints through the Church and they are forever grateful for what they have received. More than ever are they desirous of working for the ends of the Church, the glory of God, and the salvation of souls. Their glorified state, far from rendering them incapable of such work, increases the efficacy of their prayers and holy desires. Must we not expect them to be present at the celebration of Holy Mass in some mysterious though eminently real manner?

*By their merits and prayers grant that we may in all things be shielded by Thy protection and help. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

The greater the merits of the saints are, the more powerful is their intercession. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin and Mother of Jesus is always put in the first place; then the apostles are mentioned, the faithful companions of Jesus and heralds of His Gospel; lastly, some of the early martyrs as representatives of all the saints, whose life and death exercised such an inspiring influence upon the faithful.

Now the saints have received their reward, but their merits and prayers are ever present to God. And the saints themselves can again and again give expression to their desire that whatever they have done on

earth may continue to bring forth fruit for the glory of God and the good of souls.

The particular favor we wish to secure through the merits and prayers of the saints is defense and protection. Christian life is a warfare against satan and the evil spirits who roam through the world, seeking the ruin of souls. At all times and in all places, in our occupations, in prayer and at work, at home and in church, in shop and office, these evil spirits watch for opportunities to ruin souls. It is, indeed, a war on many fronts. The saints have fought the fight, they have experienced the dangers of the Christian warfare, they understand our needs and they offer their merits and prayers in our behalf, that we too may gain the crown of victory in life everlasting.

God is wonderful in His love. He has given us His divine Son to be our Savior, He has given us the saints in order that, assisted by their merits and prayers and inspired by their example, we may make ourselves worthy one day to be members of the Church Triumphant, companions of the saints in glory.

#### 4. PEACE AND SALVATION

In the Old Testament the priest would lay his hands upon the victim in a sin offering, to signify that his sins and the sins of the people passed over upon the animal. In like manner does the priest now extend his hands over host and chalice to signify that Jesus, the Lamb of God, "was wounded for our iniquities; He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our

peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed.” (Isaias 53:5) We, therefore, have every reason to pray for the fruits of our Savior’s sacrifice, namely, peace, deliverance from eternal damnation, and a place in the number of God’s elect in heaven.

*And so we beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to accept this oblation from us, Thy servants, and from Thy whole family.*

The Holy Sacrifice is eminently divine service, acknowledging our state of servitude in reference to God. Both, priest and people, are servants of God, but also members of God’s family. Servants we are, not in virtue of a freely accepted contract, but in virtue of our very nature; members of God’s family we are through the “Spirit of adoption, by virtue of which we cry, Abba Father.” (Romans 8:16) By rendering service lovingly and loyally we prove ourselves worthy of membership in God’s family.

*Dispose our days in Thy peace, bid us be delivered from eternal damnation and numbered in the flock of Thy elect. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

This petition for peace was inserted into the prayer by Pope Gregory the Great because of the troubled conditions of his times. But the petition is practical for all times. There will always be need of prayer for peace, because there will always be sin. Sinners have no peace, and sin makes the nations miserable. Hence, this petition is really a prayer for avoidance of sin and repression of evil in private and public life. What a boon it would be for mankind if all human affairs were reg-



*His hands over the Chalice the priest  
prays for peace in our days*





ulated according to God's holy will—peace throughout the world.

Damnation is the eternal loss of peace; hell the place of eternal despair, of weeping and gnashing of teeth, the place where the worm does not die and the fire is not extinguished. Yet, damnation remains a dreadful possibility for us as long as we live and must fill us with salutary fear. There is no better place to pray for deliverance from eternal damnation and no stronger hope for a favorable answer than the re-enactment of our Savior's sacrifice. "For God has not destined us unto wrath, but to gain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us." (I Thessalonians 5:19)

Deliverance from eternal damnation implies eternal salvation. Those who are saved are the chosen ones, the flock of Christ; He is their Good Shepherd and they are His sheep. He knows His sheep and they know Him. As the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, so will Jesus at the Last Judgment separate the reprobate from the elect, and then pronounce sentence. Where will our place be on that day? We do not know, but we hope, as we must hope as Christians, that we will find a place in the flock of God's elect. If, as long as we live, we listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, if we do not desert His flock and remain faithful and obedient children of His holy Church, He will protect us and no one shall be able to pluck us from His hands.

## 5. CONSECRATION

We are now transported in spirit to the Supper Room in Jerusalem, where Jesus is assembled with His

apostles, on that ever memorable evening of which St. John writes, "Before the feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come to pass out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." (John 13:1) The end of our Savior's life was at hand. The cross had loomed before His eyes ever since He had entered this world; now He is to face it in its stark and dread reality. But the New Testament, the Testament of love, needed as yet the sacrament of love, the memorial of His love to the end of time, and there was no hour more fitting to give it to the world. "Therefore, He our God and Lord, though He was about to offer Himself once by His death upon the altar of the cross, wished to leave to the Church, His beloved Spouse, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man calls for. By means of it the bloody sacrifice, which was to be offered once upon the cross, should be represented, its memory kept alive to the end of time, and its saving power applied unto the remission of those sins which are daily committed by us." (Council of Trent and Mediator Dei) In an intensely dramatic scene there is now re-enacted before us what took place in the Supper Room on that sacred evening. The priest acts as Christ acted, speaks the words which Christ spoke. Jesus acts through the priest.

*Who the day before He suffered took bread into His holy and venerable hands and, with eyes lifted up to heaven, to Thee, O God, His almighty Father, gave thanks to Thee, blessed and broke and gave to His disciples, saying: Take you all and eat of it, FOR THIS IS MY BODY.*



*"This Is My Body:" the priest utters the Words over  
the bread which thereby is transubstantiated  
into the Body of Christ*



A tremendous mystery has been enacted. A little bell is rung, all is hushed in silence; the priest kneels down in adoration, then lifts up the host for the adoration of the people. All eyes are fixed upon it, and hearts and lips repeat the cry of St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God." What has happened? With the Israelites in the desert, beholding for the first time the miraculous manna, we ask, "Manhu, what is it?" Outwardly the host appears the same as before, but faith tells us that it is no longer bread. The substance of the bread has disappeared; it has been changed into the substance of the body of Christ; the appearance of bread alone remains.

Hidden God, devoutly I adore Thee  
Truly present underneath these veils;  
All my heart subdues itself before Thee,  
Since it all before Thee faints and fails.

*In like manner, after they had supped, taking also this glorious chalice into His holy and venerable hands, and giving thanks to Thee, blessed and gave to His disciples, saying: Take and drink you all of this, FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD, OF THE NEW AND EVERLASTING TESTAMENT, THE MYSTERY OF FAITH, WHICH SHALL BE SHED FOR YOU AND FOR ALL UNTO THE REMISSION OF SINS. As often as you will do these things, do them in remembrance of Me.*

Again the little bell is rung, the priest kneels down in adoration and then lifts up the chalice for the adoration of the people. The mystery of the host has been

repeated in the wine. The liquid in the chalice looks and tastes like wine, but faith tells us that it is no longer wine. The appearance of wine alone has remained; its substance has been changed into the substance of the blood of Christ.

From whose love-pierced, sacred side  
Flowed Thy true blood's saving tide:  
Be a foretaste, sweet to me,  
In my death's great agony.

The chalice upon the altar is now indeed a glorious chalice, not because of material or workmanship, but because it contains our Savior's blood, the same blood that was contained in the chalice consecrated by our Lord Himself at the Last Supper, the same blood that was shed in His sacred Passion. Truly, the mystery of faith! And now Jesus, by bidding the apostles to do what they had seen Him doing in remembrance of Him, makes them the first priests of the New Testament, and thus provides for the mystical re-enactment of His Sacrifice and His perpetual presence on earth to the end of time. He wants those whom He loved to the end to be forever mindful of His love, and to find in this memorial of His love the inspiration and strength for His following on the way of the cross.

Let holy Mass be the sun of our lives, the first thought in the morning, the last in the evening, so that all may be enveloped in the golden rays of eucharistic love. Before the altar of sacrifice we shall learn to live and to love, to love unto death.





*The priest holds the Sacred Host  
that the faithful may adore It*







*The priest holds up the Chalice that the faithful  
may look upon it and adore the Precious Blood*



## V

### The Canon after the Consecration

**A** GAIN the priest prays that God will accept our offering—that God will be pleased with our sacrifice, as He was once pleased with the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Then the gifts offered were the fruits of the field, animals, food and drink, bread and wine. Now the gifts offered by Christ and His Church are His own Flesh and Blood. Just as before the Consecration, the priest now pauses to pray and to name those who need our prayers. This time he prays for the dead, for the members of the Church Suffering, that they may have repose and light and peace. Just as before the Consecration, the priest now names some of God's Saints; martyrs, virgins, and holy women of the early Church. Into their company we pray God to admit us—not considering our merits, but rather pardoning our offenses.

## 1. COMMEMORATION AND FULFILLMENT

**T**HE overwhelming grandeur and all-embracing saving power of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the theme of this part of the Canon. Holy Mass, because of its essential identity with the sacrifice of the cross, is the fulfillment of all typical sacrifices of the Old Testament, bloody and unbloody ones; as the sacrifice of our salvation, it brings deliverance to the poor souls and salvation to the faithful persevering to the end. It is the grandest act of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Savior and Mediator, through whom and with whom and in whom all honor and glory is given to God.

It is in obedience to Christ's command, "Do this in remembrance of me," that we offer up Holy Mass. United with Jesus we have a share in its essential act, the Consecration. However, in order to bring more fully into the consciousness of the faithful that Holy Mass is also *their* sacrifice, there follows now an explicit offering of the divine Victim on our part. It is contained in the three prayers following the Consecration. The first of these oblation prayers speaks of Holy Mass as a commemoration and fulfillment.

*Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants, but also Thy holy people, call to mind the blessed Passion, Resurrection from the dead, and the glorious Ascension into heaven of the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord.*

The same idea of Holy Mass being offered in mem-

ory of the Passion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension of our Lord was expressed in the oblation prayer after the washing of the hands. It follows from the fact that Holy Mass is the unbloody re-enactment of the Savior's bloody sacrifice, of the body delivered for us, of the blood shed for us; thus the memory of the Passion stands in the foreground. However, since, "Christ having risen from the dead, dies now no more, death shall have no longer dominion over him," (Romans 6:19) the memory of His Resurrection and Ascension is inseparable from it.

Jesus Christ now is Priest and Victim in His glorified state, and Holy Mass is and remains the fulfillment of all sacrifices of the Old Testament which prefigured it. The Council of Trent states authoritatively, "This is the oblation, which was prefigured by the diverse types of sacrifices during the period of nature as well as during the period of the Law, in as much as it comprises, as their consummation and perfection, all good things which are signified by them." And in the Secret of the seventh Sunday after Pentecost, holy Church prays, "O God, who hast given fulfillment to the variety of the sacrifices offered under the Law in the perfection of the one sacrifice, accept this sacrifice from Thy devoted servants."

*We offer to Thy exalted Majesty from among Thy gifts and presents the pure Victim, the holy Victim, the immaculate Victim, the holy bread of life everlasting and the chalice of eternal salvation.*

Not all animals could be used for the Old Testament sacrifices, but only the so-called clean animals,

which had been designated by God as such. Chosen for sacrifice they became holy unto God and were further sanctified by a special blessing. The immaculateness of the victim required that it be free from any kind of defect or deformity. In the case of irrational animals the presence of these requirements could do nothing beyond giving them a mere legal perfection. But these requirements typified the moral perfection of the divine Victim. This divine Victim is chosen from all eternity, sanctified by the hypostatic union with the second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Immaculate Virgin and Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Holy One, the Saint of saints, holy with the holiness of God Himself; in Him, therefore, all the victims of the Old Testament find their glorious fulfillment.

The principal types of the unbloody sacrifices were the sacrifice of Melchisedech and the loaves of proposition. The sacrifice of Melchisedech will be spoken of more fully in the next section. As to the loaves of proposition, the law prescribed that twelve loaves of bread were to be offered weekly in thanksgiving for and remembrance of the material sustenance of the people, particularly by means of the manna during their wanderings through the desert. Jesus, the divine Victim, makes Himself in Holy Mass the true manna, the bread of life for the sustenance of His people on their pilgrimage to the heavenly land of promise. "My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. ...This is the bread that has come down from heaven; not as your fathers ate manna and died. He who eats this bread shall live forever." (John 6:56) But no longer

are twelve loaves needed. There is but one bread. Even though there be millions of consecrated hosts, they are one and the same bread, because their substance is the substance of the one body of Jesus Christ.

This prayer suggests a sublime lesson. We offered ourselves to be victims together with Christ. Therefore we must be pure and holy and immaculate. Pure through freedom from sin, holy through sanctifying grace, immaculate through the perfection of life. If human weakness is not equal to the task, let us remember that we have at our disposal the bread of life everlasting and, therefore, of never-failing strength.

## 2. ABEL, ABRAHAM, MELCHISEDECH

*Deign to look upon this oblation with favor and grace and to accept it as Thou didst accept the gifts of Thy servant, just Abel, the sacrifice of Abraham our father, and the holy sacrifice, the clean oblation, which Thy high priest Melchisedech offered to Thee.*

This is a startling petition. Jesus Christ, our divine High Priest and Victim is infinitely more perfect and pleasing to the Father than were those holy men and their sacrifices. Moreover, the Council of Trent states, "This is the clean oblation, which can be defiled by no unworthiness or malice of those who offer it." Why then this petition? The answer is that *we* have cooperated with the divine High Priest and Victim by our prayers and actions, and have joined to the offering of the divine Victim our own selves. But the gift of



ourselves as well as our cooperation in the sacrifice are far from being perfect; they are not even as perfect as they could have been with greater effort on our part. Hence, there is good reason for praying that in spite of our imperfections and deficiencies, God will accept our sacrifice and service as He accepted the sacrifices of those holy men.

The book of Genesis records that Cain and Abel offered sacrifice to God, Cain of the fruits of the earth, Abel of the firstlings of the flocks. God accepted the sacrifice of Abel with favor and rejected the sacrifice of Cain. This rejection of his sacrifice aroused the anger and envy of Cain, which eventually led him to murder his brother. St. John gives us the reason for Cain's manner of acting. "And wherefore did he kill him? Because his own works were wicked, but his brother's just." (I John 3:12) Hence, we must conclude that Abel's sacrifice was acceptable to God because he was a just man and offered his sacrifice with sentiments of sincere piety and grateful love. So our offering will be acceptable to God if ours is a truly Christian life, and if we offer to God the firstlings, the best we have and can give.

It was at an advanced age that *Abraham* became the father of Isaac and received the divine assurance that in Isaac all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Yet, when Isaac had grown into boyhood, God demanded of Abraham that he offer up this his son as a holocaust. Humanly speaking this command must have shattered the hopes of Abraham and broken his heart. Yet, he set out at once to do what he had been commanded, firmly believing that God who had given him

this son could also raise him up from the dead. His faith was not disappointed. In the same moment in which he raised his hand to administer the fatal blow, his hand was stayed by an angel. God did not demand the life of Isaac, He was pleased with the faith and obedience of Abraham, and solemnly repeated and ratified the promises He had made to Abraham. Our offering at the altar will be pleasing to God if it is accompanied by a life of faith and obedience, of full surrender to His will. God's will must be done at all times, no matter what may be the consequences. But, if God strikes He can also heal, if He humbles He can also exalt, if He kills He can also raise to life. He will always deal with us according to infinite wisdom and love.

Mystery surrounds the person of *Melchisedech*. All that holy Scripture records of him is that he offered bread and wine to the Most High God, when Abraham had rescued Lot and his family from the hands of the marauders. The absence of any further information on his life is to focus our attention on his priesthood. St. Paul points out the significance of Melchisedech when he writes, "First, as his name shows, he is king of justice, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but likened to the Son of God, he continues a priest forever." (Hebrews 7:2f) These few facts also give the reason why his sacrifice was pleasing to God: his justice, love of peace, and unworldliness; his priesthood is typical of the priesthood of Christ, who is priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech. Hence, in order to cooperate with our divine High Priest at

Holy Mass in a manner pleasing and acceptable to God we must be, like Melchisedech, just and lovers of peace and, though in the world, keep out of our hearts the spirit of the world.

Thus understood, this prayer not only becomes intelligible, but also directs our attention to the fundamental virtues of the Christian life.

### 3. ANGEL AND ALTAR

The third and last oblation prayer after the Consecration speaks of an angel taking our oblation to an altar in heaven, and of the richness of the blessings bestowed upon us through our partaking of the altar. It is a prayer of profoundest theological and mystical depth, a grand homage to the all-embracing mediatorship of the divine High Priest.

*Suppliantly we beseech Thee, almighty God, command this oblation to be carried by the hands of Thy holy angel...*

Who is this angel? According to various interpretations this angel may be the guardian angel of the celebrating priest, or of the particular church or place in which Holy Mass is celebrated, or the word may stand for angels in general. However, we may also see in this angel Jesus Christ Himself, and this view is more satisfactory. Holy Scripture repeatedly speaks of Jesus as an angel, that is, a messenger sent by God. Especially clear are the prophets Isaias and Malachy.

According to Isaias the promised Messias is the angel of the great counsel, which counsel is the decree of our redemption. The prophet Malachy speaks of two angels: one that will go before the Messias to prepare His way, and that clearly is St. John the Baptist; the other one is the angel of the testament, the Lord, who comes to His Temple to bring to perfection the covenant of God with men. Holy Church, too, speaks of Jesus as the angel of the great counsel in the Litany of the holy Name of Jesus. All this is sufficient reason to think of Jesus as the angel mentioned in this prayer since in Holy Mass Jesus continues to carry out the great counsel of our salvation.

*Upon Thy altar on high, before Thy divine Majesty.*

In the Apocalypse St. John speaks of a golden altar in heaven standing before the throne of God. In the ordination of subdeacons holy Church refers to this vision of St. John to impress upon the candidates the excellence and sublimity of the service of the altar. The rite says, "The altar of holy Church is Christ, as John testifies, who says in the Apocalypse, that he saw standing before the throne of God a golden altar, in whom and through whom (speaking of the altar as a person) the gifts of the faithful are sanctified and offered to the Father." Holy Church, then, looks upon the altar on which Mass is celebrated and the heavenly altar as one and the same. Both symbolize Christ. Just as clear and definite is the statement we find in the second nocturn of the feast of the dedication of the archbasilica of the Most Holy Redeemer, "The altar, anointed with chrism, should express the figure of our Lord Jesus

Christ, who is our Altar, Victim, and Priest.” Nothing could express more profoundly and emphatically Christ’s all-embracing mediatorship. He is our one and all; all our prayers and good works are offered to the Father through Him.

If then, Jesus is the angel and the altar, this prayer offers no more difficulty. Jesus, the angel of the great counsel, is commanded, that is, sent by the Father to carry out the great counsel of our salvation. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is part of this decree. So Jesus takes His own sacrifice and that of the faithful united with Him into the eternal Holy of holies and presents it to His heavenly Father, thus, in the words of St. Paul “always making intercession for us.”

*May we all, who through this partaking of the altar shall receive the sacred body and blood of Thy Son, be filled with all heavenly blessing and grace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Since the altar symbolizes Christ, partaking of the altar can mean only a more intimate union with Jesus, through Holy Communion and a more abundant share in the blessings of Holy Mass. One with Him in the unity of life and love, we also share in the merits of His Passion, in His love of God and souls, in His obedience and zeal, in His meekness, humility, and patience. We need never be afraid of asking too much. “He who has not spared even His own Son, but has delivered Him for us all, how can He fail to grant us all things with Him?” (Romans 8:32) So it comes to pass that we are changed more and more into Him, that He lives in us and we in Him. “It is no longer I that live,

but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." (Galatians 2:20) We are filled with all heavenly blessing and grace.

#### 4. REFRESHMENT, LIGHT, PEACE

In the Apostles' Creed we profess that Christ after His death descended into hell, that is, the limbo of the fathers, the place where the just of the Old Testament were detained until heaven would be opened by the Savior. It is to these souls that the soul of Christ descended to bring them the glad tidings of their imminent entrance into heaven. Similarly does holy Church, after the oblation of Christ's unbloody Sacrifice, descend so to say into purgatory in the beautiful and touching memento for the dead, praying that the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice be applied to those suffering souls and that they be admitted into heaven's glory.

*Remember also, O Lord, Thy servants and handmaids, N. and N., who have gone before us with the sign of faith and repose in the sleep of peace.*

"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16) The souls of purgatory believed and were baptized, if not with the baptism of water then with the baptism of desire and, therefore, they were saved. True, they have sinned; but they also repented and, at least in the last decisive moment, they raised

aloft the sign of faith. Believing in Christ they died and so they now repose in the sleep of peace.

For the believing Christian death is a falling asleep in the Lord. The very name which we give to our burial places: cemeteries, means place of sleep, of rest. As the sleeper rises again, refreshed, to start a new day, so the dead will rise at the trumpet call of the angel on the day of judgment to begin their eternal day. Until then they are said to sleep in peace. They are at peace, because they possess the blissful certainty that they are safe and secure for eternity; no longer are they troubled by the lust of the eyes and the flesh, and the pride of life. Satan and the world cannot tempt them anymore. Their sufferings do not disturb their peace, because they see in them the means provided by the mercy of God to cleanse and prepare them for the blessed vision of God. Nevertheless they suffer severely and appeal to us for help.

*Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to them and to all who rest in Christ the place of refreshment, light, and peace.*

Refreshment is the cool shade of the evening after the heat and burden of the day. Work has come to an end for the holy souls, but the cool shade is withheld from them, because they did not do the full share of the work assigned to them or they did not do it with the perfection God had expected. Refreshment is the quenching of hunger and thirst. Surely, the souls in purgatory do not suffer material hunger and thirst, but their whole being cries out for God, for that heavenly vision of God that inebriates the saints with the torrents



*The priest prays for the dead that are gone  
before us with the sign of Faith*





of delight. But as yet they are unworthy. On earth they disregarded the hunger and thirst of God for their undivided love and preferred the delights of the world. However, the fountains of refreshment flow from the altar; we can direct their course to those holy souls. Let us do it in this prayer.

God is light and dwells in heavenly light, compared to the brightness of which purgatory is darkness. Those holy souls long to plunge into that ocean of light and be transformed into light. But, while on earth they closed their eyes in many ways to the light of faith and divine inspirations to follow their own desires; therefore, they are now left in darkness. However, the light of our Savior's mercy shines from the altar, and we can pray that it may soon kindle in those souls the perpetual light of the beatific vision.

Even though the souls in purgatory enjoy a holy peace, as stated in the first part of this prayer, theirs is not as yet the full and perfect peace of the blessed. They cannot be fully at peace until they rest in God. But they must wait. While they were on earth, God offered them the intimacy of His friendship. He dwelt in their hearts; He dwelt in the Blessed Eucharist, but they were cold and indifferent and preferred the company of creatures. Therefore, God withholds from them now the delights of His vision. Yet, the love of Jesus burns brightly upon the altar; He will not be angry forever. We can speed the day of the poor souls' reconciliation with their Father, the day of their entrance into the joy of their Lord.

There is no other means by which we could give more relief to the souls in purgatory than the Holy

Sacrifice of the Mass. Should not the love of Jesus and of those holy souls prompt us to make use of it? These holy souls are grateful, and they will remember us as long as we stand in need of help. Moreover, charity toward the dead will teach us some very important lessons. They are: to bear our share of the heat and burden of the day, to appreciate the light of faith and divine inspirations, to remember the presence of God and to seek the company of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to make better use of the means of grace and of the opportunities to atone for our sins. Life is short and every moment brings us closer to its end. As we implore relief for the poor souls we make ourselves ever more worthy of the place of refreshment, light, and peace.

## 5. HEAVEN OUR GOAL

What we implore for the poor souls is also our desire and hope, "Thanks to the Father, who has made us worthy to share the lot of the saints in light." (Colossians 1:12) Humbly and trustfully we pray for it now.

*And to us sinners also, Thy servants, who hope in the multitude of Thy mercies...*

We are sinners and admit it. The malice of our sin is aggravated by the fact that we are the servants of God, bound to render service to Him by our very nature. Trusted and admitted into the household of God we have shown ourselves unworthy of this divine trust and love.



*The priest strikes his breast with the hand  
as a sign of sorrow and penitence*



But our hope lies not in our merit but in the mercy of God, and His mercy is above all His works. Jesus loved us and therefore delivered Himself for us unto death. Host and chalice upon the altar are the memorial of His mercy. Every act of the incarnate Word of God during His earthly life was an act of mercy. Count them: all the steps He made, journeying up and down the country seeking the lost sheep, preaching, healing, doing good to all. Count the drops of blood He shed in His agony, in His scourging and crowning with thorns, in His crucifixion. Count the multitude of His mercies in His eucharistic life: every Holy Mass, from that first one in the Supper Room down the centuries to the one at which we assist, all the Communions received by the faithful, all the Viaticums carried to the sick and dying, all those little hosts in chapels and churches throughout the world; they all speak of the mercy of Him whose delight is to be with the children of men. Count all the absolutions given by Jesus Himself during His earthly life, all those given through the ministrations of His priests, those words of love and power that brought hope and joy into millions of sin-laden, sorrowful hearts; they are all in the multitude of His mercies. Then lift up your eyes to the saints in heaven. Whether they shine in the white splendor of baptismal innocence or in the purple glow of repentance, they all sing the mercies of God. That they were able to do what they did they owe to the mercy of God, and the reward which they received for their works exceeds all expectation, all proportion. These His mercies are our hope.

*Vouchsafe to grant some part and fellowship with  
Thy holy apostles and martyrs...and all Thy saints.*

We beg for some part in the inheritance of the saints. St. John in the Apocalypse endeavors to give us some idea of the enchanting beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem, but its glory is beyond human language. The Lamb of God is its light; there flows the river of life, clear and crystal from the throne of God; there grows the tree of life; there death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow.

And dwelling in that heavenly city we behold the great multitude from all tongues and tribes and nations, clothed in white garments and palms in their hands, and their hymns of joy and jubilation resound through the heavens. What will be our delight when we shall behold Jesus in the glory of His eternal majesty, the marks of the wounds sparkling like wonderful rubies in His hands and feet! What meeting will it be when we shall stand in the presence of our heavenly Mother, our hope, our sweetness, and our life! And then there are all those saints of the Old and the New Testament; there we behold the glorious choir of the apostles, the armies of martyrs in the blood-red lustre of their love, the confessors and virgins and all the uncounted numbers of the redeemed that have reached their goal. Among them are our dear ones, members of our family, relatives, friends, benefactors. And all this will be not a vision from afar, but present and everlasting reality.

God's merciful love has created heaven. Jesus the eternal High Priest and Victim opened it for us after

sin had closed it. He did it by His blood, the blood which is now upon the altar. His desire is that we should be eternally happy with Him. Therefore, though conscious of our unworthiness, we pray with unlimited trust in His goodness and mercy:

*Admit us, we beseech Thee, into their company, not weighing our merit, but mercifully granting forgiveness.*

## 6. CHRIST OUR MEDIATOR

The Canon closes with a grand homage to Christ, our divine Mediator. All grace and all heavenly blessings have come to us through Him. All honor and glory which ever have been or will be rendered by men to God are due to Him.

*Through whom, O Lord, Thou dost always create, sanctify, vivify, bless, and bestow upon us all these good things.*

The consecrated host and wine upon the altar are spoken of as good things. Good they are in the most eminent sense of the word, since they contain and represent all that is good: the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ, beneath the appearances of bread and wine. They were created, not at the Consecration, but at the beginning of time, for "All things were made through Him." (John 1:3) Even though the human nature of Christ was conceived in a miraculous manner through the overshadowing of the Blessed Vir-



gin by the Holy Spirit, the elements out of which the body of Christ was formed were taken from the body and the blood of His holy Mother and thus they ultimately go back to the beginning of time, when all things were created by the Word of God.

The substance of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, as part of His human nature, have been sanctified by the second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity in the hypostatic union. And it was the same Jesus Christ, who through the priest spoke the words of the Consecration and changed the substance of bread and wine into the substance of His own most sacred Body and Blood.

Beneath the appearances of bread and wine is present the living, glorified Christ, such as He is in heaven. To give us life he has made Himself the living and life-giving Bread.

The blessing contained in this most Holy Sacrifice and Sacrament is the fullness of the graces merited by Christ through His Passion and Death. So this Blessed Sacrament is for us the food that strengthens us for a life of holiness and prepares us for life everlasting.

All these wonderful gifts have been bestowed upon us; we have been made rich in Jesus Christ. Ours is, in all truth, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Ours is His Sacrifice and Sacrament, the cause and pledge of our salvation and of all that we need for reaching our heavenly destiny.

*Through Him and with Him and in Him is rendered to Thee, God the Father almighty, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory.*

While saying these words the priest traces the sign of the cross with the host three times over the chalice and two times between the chalice and himself and in the end, raising host and chalice a little, performs the so-called little elevation.

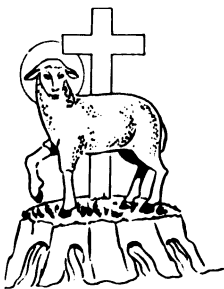
Whatever honor and glory were ever given to God in the past or will be given to Him in the future is due to Jesus. He made it possible through His cross. His grace gives value and efficacy to the good men perform. He is the angel standing before the heavenly golden altar, offering the prayers and good works of men to God. No work will be accepted by the Father unless it is presented through Him.

Our divine Mediator is not like a human benefactor who bestows some benefit upon a friend and then lets that friend shift for himself. Jesus stays with us and works with us. He becomes our brother, identifies Himself with the least one of His brethren, inspires by His example, strengthens by His grace, rejoices when He can present us to the Father as His own.

Not only through Him and with Him but also in Him do we honor and glorify God. We are thus introduced into the innermost depths of our union with the divine Mediator. He abides in us and we in Him. He is the vine and we are the branches, He is the wine and we are the drop of water poured into it. We share in His life and all His perfections. Our purity shines in the immaculateness of His life, our patience is immersed in the silence of the Lamb of God, our obedience partakes of the conformity of will of Him who became obedient unto death. In Him

the holiness of all saints receives its beauty, value, and perfection.

As we cast a reviewing glance at the prayers of the Canon, one idea stands out prominently, and that is the Christocentric character of Catholic worship. This is of eminently practical significance. Christ is our One and All. There are many devotions fostered or permitted by the Church, but their aim is always to bring us closer to Christ. True devotion to Mary leads to Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit our Lord Himself says that this Holy Spirit will glorify Him. The way to peace on earth and to salvation and eternal life is honor and glory given to God through and with and in Jesus Christ, our divine Mediator.



## VI

### From the Pater Noster to Holy Communion

UP to this point the Mass has consisted of a lengthy preparatory section—of prayers to God and instructions from God—followed by the actual sacrifice, the offering to God the Father of the Gift of His own Son's Body and Blood. Now, in exchange for the sacred Gift we have offered, we receive something from God. And what we receive in return is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

## 1. OUR FATHER

THE *Our Father* introduces the Communion service of the Mass. The significance of this part of the Mass may be said to be perfectly summarized by St. Peter when he writes, "For indeed his divine power has granted us all things pertaining to life and piety through the knowledge of him, who has called us through His glory and power, through which he has granted us the very great and precious promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption of that lust which is in the world." (II Peter 1:4) Here we gather and rejoice in the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice. The sonorous *per omnia saecula saeculorum* breaks the solemn silence of the Canon. Forever and ever Jesus is our Savior, forever and ever all honor and glory shall be rendered to the Father through Him. The *Our Father* consists of an address and seven petitions. The first three of these petitions have for their object the glorification of the Father; the last four implore divine assistance for our material and spiritual needs.

*Enlightened by the doctrines of salvation and formed by divine institution we make bold to say: Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

We were enlightened by the doctrines of salvation in the first part of the Mass, particularly in the Epistle and Gospel; we were formed, transformed into children of God by the divine institution of the whole economy of salvation, particularly through the sacraments of baptism and penance. Holy, grateful love now wells up in our hearts as we turn to the almighty God and Giver of our salvation, addressing Him as our Father. It is truth, not fiction that our Creator and Lord is also the Father of all those who were born again of the water and the Holy Spirit. But then, all of us who have been thus transformed are members of the family of God, children of God, brothers and sisters among ourselves, and heirs of heaven. Heaven is the goal of our hopes and desires, our eternal homeland. While on earth our task is to know and reverence, to love and serve God, thus glorifying, hallowing His name, to counteract the godless spirit of the world that blasphemes the holy name of God and refuses to render Him the honor and service which are His due. Loving God we shall be eager to do what He desires; but His desire is that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. We shall, therefore, pray for the coming of His kingdom, His visible kingdom on earth is the Catholic Church; through baptism men become its members. Through living faith Christ's kingdom is established in our hearts and thus we are prepared for the heavenly kingdom of glory. Glorious vistas open up for the child of God! God's will must be the law in the kingdom of God; only thus can it accomplish its purpose. The will of God is infinitely wise, just and holy, loving and merciful. It must be

done on earth as it is in heaven. It if cannot be done on earth with the same degree of perfection because of the weakness of human nature, then it can be done in the same spirit and that is gratefully, lovingly, with unlimited trust in divine Providence.

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

Having prayed for the interests of our heavenly Father we now think of our own and they are many. We depend upon God for our daily sustenance. Surely, we must eat our bread in the sweat of our face; we must work for it. But it is God, who gives us health and strength to work; He gives fertility to the soil, growth to the grain, and so it is to Him that we address ourselves asking for our daily bread. But what a humble and trustful petition this is. We do not ask for wealth or abundance, but only for those things that are necessary for life, and even these, not for weeks or months ahead, but just for this day, leaving the care for our future to His fatherly love.

*Forgive us our trespasses (debts) as we forgive those who trespass against us (our debtors).*

As we depend upon God in the needs of the body so we depend upon Him in the needs of the soul. We have failed to render to God the service which is due to Him, we have sinned and stand in need of His forgiving mercy. God is willing to forgive us, if we forgive those who have failed against us and are our debtors. This is just and fair, generous and merciful on the part of God, when we compare the immense debt which we owe to God with the trifles our fellow-

men owe to us. Let us beware of making this petition a mockery and a provocation of God's justice by an unforgiving spirit.

*Lead us not into temptation.*

Surely, God cannot lead us into temptation if we understand by temptation an incitement to sin. But God can allow that we be tempted by the devil and by evil men. He can send us tribulations which may test our obedience and patience. Our prayer should be that God will deprive us of our faculties, of life itself, if He foresees that in a given temptation we will come to fall. If such be our habitual disposition, then a fall into mortal sin becomes a practical impossibility.

*But deliver us from evil.*

Natural evils are not evils in themselves; they may be the greatest blessings. There is but one real evil in the world and that is sin; and evil are the fruits of sin. Mortal sin causes the loss of sanctifying grace and all merits, brings on temporal punishment and in the end hell, the evil of all evils. Hell is the negation of all we have prayed for in the Our Father. It is the eternal separation of the child from the Father, the loss of heaven, eternal hatred and despair, for there the worm of conscience does not die and the fire is not extinguished.

The Our Father is the most beautiful prayer, taught by Jesus Himself, the eternal Son of God and our Savior. Let us reflect on it, use its petitions as ejaculatory prayers to direct us in our work, to console us in our trials, to strengthen us in temptation, to



keep us always close to our Father. Thus we shall taste the sweetness of being the children of God, the honor and privilege of being allowed to call upon the almighty God as our Father. Amen.—So be it.

## 2. FREE AND SECURE

The prayer following the Our Father is a fuller development of the last petition: deliver us from evil. We wish to be delivered from all evils, past, present, and future, and henceforth to live in peace, free from sin, and secure against any further disturbances of peace.

*Deliver us we beseech Thee, O Lord, from all evils, past, present, and future.*

Past evils do not exist any more; but what has happened may happen again. We have sinned and it is possible that we sin again. Moreover, sins of the past may have left their sad effects with us, as also a disease, an accident, a crime may have consequences that last as long as life. The effects of sins committed are a weakened spiritual condition, liability to punishment, temporal or eternal. In these effects past evils are still with us and we surely wish to be delivered from them.

Present evils, of which we think here, are the innumerable occasions and incitements to sin arising from evil concupiscence, from the provocations of our fellowmen and the many tribulations of life. We are also fully aware of the activity of the evil spirits, prowling

about the world and seeking the ruin of souls. All these things are evils in as much as they may lead us into sin, and our prayer is that we may escape from their ruinous influence.

The future lies dark before us; the signs of the times are anything but reassuring. The powers of hell are working with feverish haste and determination to make satan the lord of the world. Shall we be able to withstand their wicked designs? Shall war with all its horrors, loss of health and home and fortune, persecution for the sake of faith fall to our lot? Shall we have the courage to bear such tribulations? With the grace of God we will, and we pray for it in this place.

*And by the intercession of the blessed and glorious Mary, ever Virgin, Mother of God, and of Thy holy apostles Peter and Paul, Andrew, and of all the saints, graciously grant peace in our days, so that assisted by Thy mercy we may ever be free from sin and secure against all disturbances.*

Peace is a precious possession; peace of heart and peace among nations and the various classes of society. The popes have exhorted the faithful again and again to pray for peace, that wars may come to an end, that the rights and dignity of the human person be respected, that men may live in harmony with their God-given destiny. But, if we pray for peace, we must also do the things that lead to peace. Loving submission to God's all-wise and holy will in all conditions of life is the surest way to peace of heart, nay the only way; it is a wonderful contribution to peace in the world. As to our fellowmen, charity leads to peace more ef-

fectively than any other device. Charity respects the rights of others; therefore, does the Apostle say, "Owe no man anything except to love one another." (Romans 13:8) And over and above being just, "Charity is patient, is kind, ...bears with all things,...endures all things." (I Corinthians 13:4ff)

Secure against disturbances of peace is the man who is free from sin and firmly anchored in hope and love. He will not be spared the temptations and tribulations of life; this would be against the very idea of the Christian life as a following of Christ Crucified, and is not the object of this petition. But it is possible, even in the midst of the severest trials, that we are at peace in the innermost depths of the soul and rejoice as the Apostle did rejoice in the midst of all his tribulations. Security based on unshakable faith and trust is the object of this prayer and it will be supported by the saints, whose intercession we implore. As their divine Master, so they all entered into their glory through many tribulations. It remains for us to increase our faith and trust in divine providence. Against the will of God nothing can happen, and to those who love God all things work together unto good, so that amid the changing conditions of this life our heart be ever set where true joys abide.

### 3. BREAKING, MINGLING, CONSECRATING

The closing of the prayer which we have just now considered is striking, both in its words and the cere-



*The priest breaks the Sacred Host in half, breaks off a small piece from the portion in his left hand and drops it into the chalice*



monies. Holding the host over the chalice the priest breaks it into two halves: the part in his right hand he places on the paten; from the other half he breaks off a small particle. With the latter he traces the sign of the cross three times over the chalice and finally drops it into the sacred Blood. The words which accompany these ceremonies are:

*Through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.*

*May the peace of the Lord be always with you.*

The answer of the server is: and also with you. *May this commingling and consecration of the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ impart to us, who will receive it, life everlasting.*

The breaking of the host is performed in imitation of our Lord who did the same at the Last Supper, and serves the practical purpose of reducing the large host to a convenient size for the Communion of the priest. But, as most of the ceremonies of Holy Mass are profoundly symbolical, we must expect that this breaking of the host over the chalice illustrates an important truth. It symbolizes that the sacred Blood contained in the chalice was made to flow from the body of our Savior during His Passion; it is the Blood that cleansed us from our sins and brought us peace. The dropping of the particle of the host into the chalice then reminds us of the fact that at the Resurrection Body and Blood were reunited. This reunion of Body and Blood in the glorified body of the Savior was its final consecration to be forever the temple of God and tabernacle of the

Most High; in like manner is this commingling of the sacramental species their final dedication to be the bread of life that imparts to us life everlasting. But life everlasting is also everlasting peace.

#### 4. AGNUS DEI

The three invocations of Jesus as the Lamb of God form a fitting connection between the Our Father and Holy Communion. We may see in them a reference to the paschal lamb, the manna, and the Lamb triumphant in heaven.

*Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.*

We are familiar with the story of the Israelites in Egypt and their eventual liberation through Moses. In the night of their departure, as the last plague struck the Egyptians, the Israelites were commanded to slaughter a lamb and to paint its blood on the doorposts of their houses as a sign of protection. Then they were to eat the lamb in haste, ready at a moment's notice to depart. This lamb was called paschal lamb from a phrase, which means passing, because the angel of God, as he slew the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, passed by the houses of the Israelites sparing their sons.

The paschal lamb is a type of Jesus, the true paschal lamb. He was slain upon the cross; His blood is our protection. His death delivered us from the slavery of satan and inaugurated our departure for our heavenly

homeland. Holy Mass is the unbloody re-enactment of the slaying of the true paschal lamb and we ought to be ever mindful of this fact. The Council of Trent states, "Having celebrated the ancient pasch, which the multitude of the children of Israel offered up in memory of their departure from Egypt, He instituted the new pasch, in which He Himself wished to be offered up by the Church through the priests under visible signs, in memory of His departure from this world to the Father, when by the shedding of His blood He redeemed and delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into His kingdom."

*Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.*

Many were the dangers and hardships of the Israelites during their wandering through the desert. But God protected His people and in innumerable ways proved to them His loving care and providence. He caused Pharaoh and his army to be drowned in the Red Sea, He went before them in a pillar of cloud, He gave them water from a rock for their thirst and sent them quails to satisfy their desire for meat; above all, He fed them with the miraculous manna until they reached the promised land.

All this is typical of the chosen people of the New Testament. Their way to the promised land of heaven leads through the desert of this world, and many are the hardships and temptations to which we are exposed. But God is our protector and helper. As the greatest gift bestowed upon the Israelites was the manna, so is the true manna the greatest gift granted to the



Christian people. And this manna is the flesh and blood of the Lamb of God, "This is the bread that has come down from heaven; not as your fathers ate the manna and died. He who eats this bread shall live forever." (John 6:59) We receive this true manna in Holy Communion and it will sustain our spiritual life until we reach the heavenly homeland.

*Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us peace.*

After forty years of wandering through the desert the Israelites arrived in the land, which God had promised to Abraham and his descendants. The paschal lamb and the manna had prepared and sustained them for it. All their hopes and expectations were now fulfilled.

Heaven is the Christian's land of promise, the goal of his hopes and desires. Once he has reached it, he will fully realize that he owes it all to the true paschal lamb, the true manna, to Jesus, who died for him and then gave Himself to him as the bread of life. So St. John in the Apocalypse sees the Lamb of God upon a throne and the multitude of the saints adoring Him and giving thanks, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing." (Apocalypse 5:12) Heaven's joys are beyond thought and imagination in their all-surpassing bliss, and they are the gift of the Lamb of God, "They shall neither hunger nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike them nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and guide them to the fountains

of the waters of life, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. ...And death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Apocalypse 7:16; 21:4) That is peace in its ultimate bliss and perfection. May the Lamb of God grant it to us.

The Agnus Dei suggests a very important and inspiring lesson. Life is a pilgrimage; we are constantly moving closer to its end. Hence, let us not attach our hearts to persons, places, or possessions, which we must leave behind sooner or later. Life is a pilgrimage through desert country, infested by hostile powers; let us, then, not expect the peace and comfort of home, but rather hardship and struggle. Let us keep our gaze steadily fixed on our heavenly homeland. There eternal liberty and peace shall be ours, after the short years of this passing life.

## 5. PEACE AND UNITY

Peace was the object of the last petition of the Agnus Dei, and in many other places does the Church pray for peace. Peace is the most favorable condition for the Church to carry out her mission. And there ought to be an anticipation of heavenly peace in the Church, because it is the kingdom of peace, ruled by the Prince of peace. So we continue to pray for it.

*Lord Jesus Christ, who hast said to Thy apostles:  
Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you.*

The peace of Christ! Jesus spoke those words at the

Last Supper, about two hours before the beginning of His Passion—the terrible agony in the garden of Gethsemane. He was surrounded by the shadows of death, but His heart was at peace. It was the peace of the beatific vision; His soul was flooded with the delights of heaven even in the midst of agony and suffering. His was the peace of perfect and absolute conformity with the will of the Father; He had accomplished the task which the Father had entrusted to Him. It was the peace of certain victory and the knowledge of the blessings that would come to the world through His sacred Passion.

The peace of the beatific vision is not granted to us in this life, but the vision of faith may be strong and penetrating, discovering the hand of a loving Providence in all the conditions of life, in all the sufferings of the Church. Nothing happens by chance; all things were known to God and taken up into His plan of the world. "These things I have spoken to you that in me you may have peace." (John 16:33)

*Look not upon my sins, but upon the faith of Thy Church.*

Sin is the greatest disturber of peace. All heresies and schisms, all strife and struggle within the Church are due to sin; to pride, envy, lust. What a diseased limb is for the health of the body, the sins of individual members of the Church are for the mystical body of Christ. In one way or other they disturb peace and unity and interfere with the work of the Church. We most emphatically do not want to obstruct the work of the Church.

As the sins of the faithful exercise a baneful influence in the Church, so the living faith and the holy lives of other members exercise an invigorating, sanctifying influence. As St. John Chrysostom says, "He who is meek and humble, merciful and just, does not enclose such virtuous deeds within himself, but he will send them forth as glorious fountains for the benefit of others. And he who is pure of heart and peace-loving and suffers persecution for the sake of truth contributes by his life in like manner to the welfare of all." And if God would have spared Sodom and Gomorrha for the sake of five just men, we surely have reason to hope that He will bless us and the work of the Church for the sake of so many saints. This is the reason why we implore our divine Master not to look upon our sins but upon the faith of His Church—His holy Church. But this very petition contains a powerful appeal that we contribute to the peace of the Church, not only by the words of prayer, but also by the deeds of a Christian life.

*Vouchsafe to grant her peace and unity according to Thy will. Who livest and reignest, God, forever and ever. Amen.*

The unity of the Church in her faith, sacraments, and government is a mark of the true Church and will never fail her. But among some members of the Church the unity of love and action may be lacking. Even in the early Christian communities quarrels and contentions were to be found as we learn from the Epistles of St. Paul. Who will say that such things have disappeared in our modern Church-life? Jesus Himself prayed

for unity among the members of the Church in His last, high-priestly prayer, "Yet not for these only do I pray, but for all those who through their word are to believe in me, that all may be one, even as Thou, Father, in me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." (John 17:20) Peace and unity among the members of the Church were of utmost concern to St. Paul. It is such mutual love and helpfulness of unity that is in his mind when he writes, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not the sharing of the blood of Christ? And the bread that we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? Because the bread is one, we, though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread." (I Corinthians 10:16) As many grains have entered into the making of bread, many grapes into the making of wine, so the multitude of the faithful have been united in the unity of the mystical body of Christ. There is but one such mystical body as there is but one Christ, and there is but one bread to give life to its members and to keep them in living union with the head and the other members, and that is Holy Communion, the one and same body and blood of Christ.

A fuller realization of this oneness in Christ would to the same extent do away with the divisive force of racial and national prejudice and the pursuance of special interests to the detriment of the whole Church. It would be a mighty contribution to bring to its full realization the motto of Pius XI of glorious memory, "The peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ."

## 6. UNION INSEPARABLE

The immediate preparation for Holy Communion is made in the following two prayers. The first one states in its three petitions the principal fruits of Holy Communion as the object of our desire: to be delivered from all evils and iniquities, always to cling to the commandments of God, never to be separated from Him. The solid basis for our hope to have these petitions granted is the work done by the three divine Persons in behalf of our salvation.

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who by the will of the Father and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit hast by Thy death given life to the world.*

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were active in our salvation. The Father, "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that those who believe in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." (John 3:16) This loving will of the Father is carried out by the Son, "Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God." (Hebrews 10:7) It was a dreadful price the Son paid for our salvation in His agony and Passion, but the thought of the will of the Father strengthens Him, "My Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done." (Matthew 26:42) The Holy Spirit cooperates. It is through Him that our Savior is conceived by the Blessed Virgin Mary; Jesus Himself gives testimony that He has been anointed for His mission and sent by the Holy Spirit. St. Paul tells us that Jesus offered Himself to the Father as an immaculate Victim

through the love of the Holy Spirit. And after Christ has accomplished His mission, it is the Holy Spirit who brings it to its ultimate perfection. He, so to speak, takes over the Church for the work of salvation on Pentecost Day. Could we be given more convincing proofs of God's will to save us?

*Deliver me through this Thy most sacred body and blood from all my iniquities and all evils.*

Freedom from mortal sin is the first prerequisite for a worthy reception of Holy Communion. Holy Communion is a sacrament of the living; it is the food of the soul, and food in order to be beneficial demands a living organism. But even though there is no mortal sin, there may be venial sins to obstruct the free operation of grace. Moreover, many potential iniquities and evils are left in us through concupiscence. The effect of Holy Communion is to cleanse us from venial sin and to strengthen us against these potential iniquities, the inclination to vanity and pride, to sensuality and intemperance, to uncharitableness and injustice. This very petition is an implicit act of sorrow for past sins and a definite detestation and rejection of any future offense of God, and thus opens the soul for an abundant communication of grace.

*Make me always cleave to Thy commandments and suffer me not to be separated from Thee, who with the same God, the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, God, forever and ever. Amen.*

Cleaving to the commandments of God is to love and observe them; their observance is the proof of our

love and love keeps us united with Jesus. He Himself has said so, "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. ...If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we will come and make our abode with him. He who does not love me, does not keep my words." (John 14:21, 23ff) The observance of the commandments will preserve us from all evils and iniquities. If, because of our weakness and fickleness, we must figure with a relapse into past sins, then at least this expression of our sincere desire to cleave to His commandments will lessen their frequency and malice.

Separation from Christ would be our ruin, "If anyone does not abide in me, he shall be cast outside as the branch and wither. And they shall gather them up and cast them into the fire, and they shall burn." (John 15:16) This is a prayer for perseverance in the love of God until death. But love is humble, distrusting self and putting all hope in God. At the Last Supper Peter protested his loyalty to Jesus. He would never be scandalized in his Master, he would never desert Him, he would go with Him into death; yet, he denied Jesus. The history of the Church records many examples of men, priests, and ordinary faithful, who followed Peter in his denial, nay even Judas in his betrayal of Jesus, and that in spite of most fervent protestations of loyalty to Christ and His Church in their earlier life. Our own experience should teach us a lesson not to trust in our own strength and make us humble, and such humility adds to the value of this prayer.

Separation from Jesus through mortal sin does not come all at once. Many infidelities and small transgres-



sions have preceded, many lights and inspirations disregarded, many venial sins committed, until at last the weakened condition of the soul yielded to a grievous temptation, and mortal sin extinguished the life of grace. If we want the end, we must want the means. The sacramental grace of Holy Communion will assist us to take care of our duties, to listen to those many inspirations of grace, to make use of the innumerable opportunities to strengthen our will and to increase our love of God, to form strong habits of virtue, and thus we shall be preserved from that terrible calamity of mortal sin—separation from Jesus, our Life.

## 7. PROTECTION AND HEALING

Should it be possible that the sacrifice of our salvation and the sacrament of life ever become the occasion for condemnation and eternal death? Alas, it is a dreadful possibility, because Holy Communion may be received unworthily. That we may be preserved from such a misfortune is the object of the following prayer.

*Let not the partaking of Thy body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I, though unworthy, make bold to receive, turn to my judgment and condemnation.*

God is holy and whomsoever approaches God must be holy. Even material things dedicated to God or used for His service are sacred and must be treated with the utmost reverence. Therefore, church and altar,

the sacred vessels and vestments, must be blessed or consecrated. Sacred ceremonies profoundly significant in their symbolism are employed in the celebration of Holy Mass. All this is to impress the faithful with the holiness of the divine mysteries.

What then must we say of him who receives Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin? To do this is an abomination in the sight of God; no material defilement of vessels or vestments is comparable to it. When King Nabuchodonosor desecrated the sacred vessels from the Temple of Jerusalem at a profane banquet, mysterious fingers appeared and wrote upon the wall of the banquet hall the doom of the king and his kingdom: Mane, Thekel, Phares—Numbered, Weighed, Divided. Infinitely greater is the sacrilege of an unworthy Communion. No wonder this sin was so severely punished by God in the early times of Christianity, as we learn from St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. Even if in our days extraordinary punishment for this sin is rare, its malice remains the same and punishment is sure to come, if not in this life, then in the next. For, "He who eats this bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup; for he who eats and drinks unworthily, without distinguishing the body, eats and drinks judgment to himself." (I Corinthians 11:27ff)

*But according to Thy goodness may it be unto me protection for mind and body and as the taking of a remedy. Who livest and reignest with God the*

*Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.*

One of the effects of Holy Communion is that it spiritualizes our life. Spiritual ideals and heavenly desires gradually take possession of the mind, and to the same extent worldly ideals and desires lose their appeal. Under the influence of Holy Communion worthily received there develops in the soul a certain sensitiveness to whatever is unholy and dangerous. The soul, having experienced the warmth of divine love, feels the icy draughts of sin even at a distance. The love of Jesus never sleeps and gives immediate notice of the approach of the tempter. Here is our protection. And should God allow that persecution, torture and death should become the lot of His faithful followers, Holy Communion will also then be their strength and victory, as it has been and is in the case of innumerable martyrs and confessors of the faith.

And there is healing power in Holy Communion. Human nature is morally sick in consequence of original and personal sin. Bodily sickness implies that the organism is not functioning properly: the heart, the lungs, the digestive system. Sickly persons become easily fatigued, irritable, dejected, and often are afflicted with abnormal cravings for things which are injurious to health and recovery. In a similar manner the moral nature of man has been affected by original and personal sin. This is the reason why men are inclined to evil, find the practice of virtue difficult, and frequently come to fall. St. Pius X in his encyclical on frequent Communion emphatically states that Holy Communion

is the remedy for this moral weakness of men, and that for this reason it should be received frequently, if possible even daily. True, there will be no perfect healing in this life, but there can and will be continuous improvement in our condition, until the infirmities of this life give way to the health and vigor of heavenly life. Holy Communion brings us an increase of the divine life of grace, and an increase of this divine life means also an increase of holy ambitions, spiritual strength and efficiency, joy and peace in the Lord, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, abides in me and I in him. ...As I live because of the Father, he who eats me, he also shall live because of me. ...He who eats this bread shall live forever." (John 6:57ff) Could there be any stronger motives to receive Holy Communion frequently, daily? The efforts we make in this regard are a reliable norm by which to judge our attitude toward the attainment of Christian perfection.

## 8. BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

Let us first recall the object of our Savior's sacrifice. Jesus died for our salvation, that is, to atone for our sins, to reconcile and unite us again with the Father. In Holy Mass He re-enacted in an unbloody manner His bloody sacrifice. We joined Him in doing this, offering ourselves with Him and through Him, so that we too might contribute our share to this atonement, reconciliation, and union. Now, in Holy Communion

we receive the tangible pledge that God has accepted our offering and received us into the union of His life and love. The reception of Holy Communion is an act of tremendous significance. It is the greatest gift which God could give us—He cannot give more than Himself; it means an incomprehensible exaltation for us—we are raised to a participation in the divine life; it brings inspiration and invincible strength for the pursuit of Christian perfection. The thought of this marvelous grandeur of Holy Communion arouses desire for it. However, we cannot forget what we are of ourselves and what we have done in the past. The remembrance of our sinfulness cannot but keep us humble; on the other hand, God's goodness inspires confidence, and so we pray for healing from our weakness and spiritual infirmity, for perseverance in the love of God, so that the ultimate object of all that Jesus has done for us may be attained in our being preserved unto life everlasting. These are the thoughts expressed in the short but profoundly meaningful prayers immediately preceding the reception of Holy Communion.

After the priest has received Holy Communion under both species, the faithful receive it under the species of bread only. Profound knowledge of the human heart and consummate skill in arousing holy emotions characterize the final touch which holy Church adds to her preparation for Holy Communion.

The necessity of utmost purity of heart is impressed upon the faithful by the liturgical absolution which, turning to the people, the priest pronounces, "May the almighty God have mercy on you, forgive your sins, and lead you to life everlasting. May the

almighty and merciful God grant you pardon, absolution, and remission of your sins. Amen." Then, holding up a sacred host before the people, the priest says, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him, who takes away the sins of the world. O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." Unlimited trust in the anointing power of our Savior's death, humble sorrow for sins committed, loving desires for spiritual health and holiness of life fuse in this beautiful touching prayer, soul-stirring in its threefold repetition.

## 9. O LORD, I AM NOT WORTHY

It was after the sermon on the Mount, when Jesus had returned to Capharnaum, that a Roman centurion approached Him. Although a pagan, he had great faith in Jesus of whose miracles he had heard. A servant of this man was sick and it shows the kind and sympathetic nature of the centurion that, upon hearing of the approach of Jesus, he at once made up his mind to seek help with this miracle-working prophet. Jesus immediately showed Himself ready to go to the house of the centurion in order to heal the servant. This was more than the centurion had expected; he considered himself unworthy of such an honor and said to Jesus, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant shall be healed." Jesus was pleased with the humble faith of this pagan and said to the people surrounding Him,

"Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great a faith in Israel." Then He spoke the word that healed the centurion's servant. Holy Church has taken these words into the liturgy of the Mass and uses them in preparation for Holy Communion. They are to arouse in the faithful the faith and humility of this centurion.

*O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof.*

Surely, this is not to be an unworthy Communion, strictly so-called; we have the moral certainty that we are in the state of sanctifying grace. Yet, we are not worthy. Our Blessed Mother in her exalted purity and holiness is not worthy; the Cherubim and Seraphim are not worthy; the greatest saints have pronounced these words, and that with a profounder realization of their unworthiness than we do. No created being is worthy, deserving, entitled to such an intimate union with our Lord and Savior as is granted us in Holy Communion. The sense of unworthiness is deepened by the fact that we do not even possess that degree of worthiness which we could and should have acquired. Who can say that he has never sinned, that he has made all possible atonement for the sins committed, that he followed all the inspirations of grace, complied with the duties of his state of life? We could be saints and are very mediocre in our spiritual life; we could be millionaires in spiritual treasures, yet have wasted our chances; we could be heroes and are cowards. Even though all is forgiven by our kind and merciful Lord, the very thought of indifference and ingratitude in the past is extremely uncomfortable on this occasion, when



*The priest receives Holy Communion, the  
Body and the Blood of Jesus Christ*





we are face to face with the all-exceeding love of our Savior.

*But only say the word and my soul shall be healed.*

The very purpose of our Savior's coming into this world is to bring us forgiveness and grace. Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world; He is the physician of souls to bring health to the sick. His forgiving mercy is unlimited; so must be our confidence in Him. With humble faith and trust we beseech Him that He would say to us the word of power and love that will heal us. We beg Him to say the word that He spoke to the blind man of Jericho so that we may see the light, showing us the way to holiness and heaven; the word that He spoke to the deaf when He restored their hearing, that we may listen to the call of grace and the guidance of holy Church; the word He spoke to the paralytic so that we may freely move on the road of Christian perfection; the word of love which He addressed to all who labor and are burdened, so that we may find rest for our souls.

We shall have reason to say this prayer as long as we live. Perfect spiritual health is not the lot of man in this life; we hope for it in the life to come. But there is possible daily improvement and progress in virtue. Our charity can grow in intensity, our patience in endurance, our suffering in love, our manners in humility, our efforts in generosity. It is for such growth in our spiritual health that we pray, and we know that sublime heights of sanctity are within the reach of the Christian even in this life. But the final answer to this prayer shall be given when we enter the land of eternal

youth, and when He to whom we address this prayer, "will refashion the body of our lowliness, conforming it to the body of His glory." (Philippians 3:21)

## 10. THE BODY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Jesus, the Word of God through Whom all things were made, the Giver of all life because He is the life of the world, has made Himself the bread of life in Holy Communion, in order to let us share in His life and to sustain in us the life of grace until it passes over into the everlasting life of glory. An increase of this divine life, a steady growth and perseverance in it to the end of our lives is the object of the prayer, which the priest says as he himself receives Holy Communion and as he distributes it to the faithful.

*May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my (your) soul unto life everlasting.*

With eyes enlightened by faith we look upon the sacred host; it is not bread, but the Body of Jesus. In the synagogue of Capharnaum Jesus stated clearly and definitely, "The bread which I will give you is my flesh for the life of the world." (John 6:52) At the Last Supper Jesus gave to the apostles what appeared to be bread with the words, "This is my body; do this in remembrance of me." The celebration of Holy Mass was the fulfillment of the command of Jesus. So we believe that the host which we received in Holy Communion is the Body of Jesus, the Body conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, the Body that hung on the cross, rose from the dead, and glo-

riously ascended into heaven, where It is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He who is present beneath these appearances of bread is our Lord because He is God. He proved His divinity by the countless miracles He wrought. And although He is now in heaven, He continues to act as the Lord of nature in the wonders of the Eucharist. There are the appearances of bread without the substance of bread. Christ is present beneath these appearances; whole and undivided in every particle of the host, whole in all the hosts throughout the world.

The name of God, made man, is Jesus; Jesus means Savior. The angel directs St. Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) So does the angel speak to the shepherds, "There has been born to you today in the town of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11) He came to save us from the slavery of satan, from sin and death. There is no other name by which we could be saved.

Jesus is our Savior because He is the Christ, the Anointed One. In the Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. Jesus unites their offices in His Person. He is the divine Teacher that taught men the way of salvation; as He was about to leave this world He commissioned the apostles and through them the Church to teach all nations and to make all men His disciples. Jesus acts as the divine High Priest in His bloody sacrifice on the cross and as "Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech" in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Through His blood we were redeemed and became His property by a new title.

He is now our King, and the redeemed are the members of His kingdom. However, as He informs Pilate, His kingdom is not of this world, not a political but a spiritual kingdom. He rules over minds and hearts, placing before His followers His law and His example, that all might pattern their lives after His own.

Holy Communion brings to us the Body and the Blood of the glorified, immortal Christ; therefore, it sustains within us the divine life and is the pledge and guaranty of the eternal life of glory. "Thus by partaking of His flesh we are illumined by the light of eternal truth, and are transfigured and transformed by its glory; and in His blood the ocean of eternal life and divine love floods our hearts. By the divine power inhabiting the Lord's flesh we are transformed in soul into the image of His divine glory, and in body into the image of His own glorified body... But this sacrament is at the same time a pledge and guaranty that the seed will some day flower into full beauty, that the Logos (Jesus) will irradiate and transform us with the plenitude of His light, and that He will completely flood us through and refresh us with the torrent of His love and His life, so that in knowledge and in love our lives will appear as the full expression and outpouring of the divine life." (Scheeben-Vollert) Indeed, if the touch of the hem of Christ's garment healed the sick woman in the Gospel, if by the application of the relics of the saints, countless miracles have been performed, what must we not expect from the living and life-giving union with the living, glorified, immortal Christ in Holy Communion, "He who eats this bread shall live forever." (John 6:59)



*The priest gives Holy Communion to the people*



## VII

### The Closing Parts

**T**HE REMAINDER of Mass is rather brief, once Communion has been distributed. After all, we have done the work of the Mass. We have worshipped God—first by offering Him the perfect Gift of His Son, then by receiving from Him the Gift of that Son in Holy Communion. So the concluding prayers of Mass are simple and not too long. When they are over our thoughts will be properly directed to God. We will be able to meditate and consider what we have accomplished at Mass.



## 1. MAY IT CLEAVE TO MY SOUL

**T**HE PRAYERS after Holy Communion contain substantially the same petitions as those mentioned before, that is, healing from our spiritual infirmities, elimination of all that is evil, an increase of the divine life, perseverance to the end. What else could they be? "What have I in heaven and what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart and my portion forever." As the priest purifies the chalice and then his fingers, he prays:

*What we have received with the mouth, may we keep with a pure mind, and may the temporal gift be for us an everlasting remedy.*

*May Thy body, O Lord, which I have received, and the blood which I have drunk cleave to my soul; and grant that no stain of sin may remain in me after the pure and holy mysteries have refreshed me. Who livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen.*

Holy Communion is a temporal gift, meant only for this life, as a remedy to prepare us for the life to come. If it is to produce this effect, it must be received with a pure mind, a mind sincerely intent upon the avoidance of sin and progress in Christian perfection; it must become a vital force in our lives; it must cleave to our souls in our memory, mind, will, emotions.

The memory of Holy Mass ought to stay with me throughout the day. There are events in the life of

every man, which imprint themselves indelibly upon his memory; usually they are events associated with some great sorrow or joy. There can be no event comparable in sorrow and in joy to what has taken place upon the altar. Holy Mass is the re-enactment of Christ's bloody sacrifice on the cross, an event so sorrowful that even nature manifested its grief and horror—the sun was darkened, the earth trembled, and the rocks were split asunder. There was present on the altar and received in Holy Communion the same Body that hung upon the cross, the same Blood that was shed from the Savior's wounds. But out of this death life has sprung, and out of this sorrow joy has blossomed forth, for by it we have received forgiveness of our sins, have been made the children of God and heirs of heaven. Could we ever forget it? Yet, we think of a thousand things, our work, our troubles, our joys, our friends and relatives, but fail to remember that one event that should occupy the first place in our memory, and thus do not experience the refreshing power of these sacred mysteries.

If these sacred mysteries are remembered the mind will show their effect in judging things according to the standards of Christ. He came down to this earth, suffered, and died, and perpetuates His sacrifice in Holy Mass for us and our salvation. St. Paul reminds us of the fact that we have been bought at a great price, and St. Peter writes, "You were redeemed...not with perishable things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." (I Peter 1:18) What must be the value of the soul that Jesus does not consider His own blood too great a price to pay for its

salvation! What do I think of the value of my soul? What do I do in order to guard it against sin, to save, and sanctify it? In the light of the Body and the Blood of Jesus Christ what must I think of those worldly pursuits, riches and pleasures, which endanger the salvation of my soul? What of my neglect of prayer, my selfishness, my sins?

These sacred mysteries are the standing proof of Jesus' words that He loved us to the end. He gave us all that He could give, Himself, in life and in death and in His heavenly glory. Does not such love call for loving surrender and generous loyal following, no matter what might be the cost? Yet, as the author of the *Imitation of Christ* says, "Jesus has now many who love His heavenly kingdom, but few who carry His cross. Many desire His consolations, but few are eager for tribulations. He finds many companions for His banquet, but few for His fasting. All wish to rejoice with Him, few only are willing to suffer something for Him. Many follow Jesus as far as the breaking of the bread, few only as far as the drinking of the cup of the Passion." Why? Because these sacred mysteries do not cleave to the will, and therefore cannot exercise their motivating energy.

Emotions are part of the human make-up, though they are present in varying degrees of intensity in different persons. Whatever they may be, the sacred mysteries of the Mass must cleave to them. The primary cause that arouses them and the ultimate object to which they tend must be the Body and the Blood of the Lord. If there is any sorrow, let it be because God is offended, His love ungratefully rejected, His cause

neglected. If there is any fear, let it be because we are not as yet definitely saved and are in the dreadful possibility of losing our souls, of being eternally separated from Him who is our life. If there is any hope, it must be grounded upon our Savior's cross, in which there is salvation, life, and resurrection. If there is any true and lasting joy to brighten our lives, it must flow from these sacred mysteries at which we have assisted, the pledge of life everlasting and anticipation of the heavenly banquet. The day on which we have assisted at Mass and received Holy Communion is truly a day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.

These prayers after Holy Communion, short though they are, are inexhaustible in their richness and power. Where they are said in the proper way, no stain of sin can remain in the soul. True, the very repetition of this prayer day after day suggests that it will be perfectly answered only in the next life. As long as we live here below we shall pay tribute to human weakness. We cannot prevent dust from settling on objects, but we can prevent it from accumulating; we cannot escape all the poisonous germs in the poisoned atmosphere of the world, but we can take medicine to counteract the effect of the poison. If, upon our return from Holy Mass and Holy Communion, we could begin our day's work all pure and free from any stain of sin, and if during the day the Body and the Blood of our Savior would cleave to our soul, to memory, mind, will, and emotions, we would proceed with giant strides on the road of Christian perfection. "For this, the highest and most worthy sacrament, is the health of body and soul, the cure of every spiritual weakness; in it my

defects are remedied, my passions restrained, and temptations overcome or allayed. In it greater grace is infused, growing virtue is nourished, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and charity fanned into flame.” (*Imitation of Christ*—Bruce)

## 2. THE FINAL OBLATION

The liturgical Communion service is brought to a close by the Communion and Postcommunion prayers. The Mass proper is finished: *Ite missa est*—Go, the Mass is over. In former centuries, when the celebration of Mass lasted much longer than it does at present, the faithful were dismissed at this place. In the course of time three very appropriate features were added, that is, the final oblation, the blessing, and the last Gospel. Standing in the middle of the altar, with his head inclined and his hand touching the altar, the priest prays:

*May the homage of my service be pleasing to Thee, O Holy Trinity, and do Thou grant that the sacrifice, which I, unworthy though I am, have offered in Thy sight, may be acceptable to Thee and through Thy mercy a propitiation for me and for all, for whom I have offered it up. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

This final oblation is a summary repetition of the primary object of the Holy Sacrifice, a ratification of the gifts we have offered, a rectification of any faults or disorders that may have occurred in the performance of the sacred mysteries. The celebration of Holy Mass

is an act of homage offered to the Blessed Trinity. The sacred place in which this was done, vessels and vestments of distinguished form and material, the beauty and sublimity of the prayers and ceremonies, all added to the solemnity of this act of homage. The fact that Jesus Christ, our divine High Priest and Victim, acted as our Mediator gave it infinite value. But the honor and privilege, which we enjoyed in cooperating with the divine High Priest, also imposed definite duties upon us.

It was the Father's well-beloved Son who acted in these mysteries. The Father so loved the world, that He delivered His eternal Son into death that we might live. Any culpable irreverence or negligence we may have become guilty of during the sacred action is an offense to the most loving Father, an act of ingratitude. The eternal Son was present beneath the sacred species, and our way of handling these assumes a most intimate, a personal touch; indifference, carelessness, must be particularly painful to Him. But above all Jesus expected from us similarity of sentiments. As He delivered Himself for us because He loved us, so we, too, are to love Him and give ourselves to Him and to His service. But, if our thoughts and desires were occupied with worldly things, if we remained attached to our own will, if there was unwillingness to accept our full share of the cross, we filled His sacred Heart with sorrow. The Holy Spirit watched the sacred action with personal interest. It was through Him that Jesus was conceived and anointed in preparation for His mission, and in the love of the Holy Spirit Jesus offered Himself to the Father as an immaculate victim. The Holy

Spirit is divinely eager to complete the work of Jesus by applying to our souls the grace merited by Christ. But, if our cooperation in this mystery of love was cold and lifeless, if we showed little appreciation of the gifts of grace, if the oblation of ourselves was superficial and half-hearted, we obstructed the work of the Holy Spirit and offended Him.

The petition that our oblation may be pleasing to the Holy Trinity is an implicit act of sorrow and reparation for our faults and deficiencies; according to its intensity, it will make our oblation pleasing to God and acceptable by a sort of retroaction. This so much the more as Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. Our disobedience is swallowed up in His obedience unto death; our ingratitude is covered by the filial gratitude of Jesus, who gave thanks at all times, but particularly by making Himself our thanksgiving in the blessed Eucharist. If there is any injustice in our work, it is rectified by the justice of Jesus, who returned to His heavenly Father all that He had received from Him and fully accomplished the work for which He had been sent into the world. Our pride and impatience are taken away by the humility and meekness of the Lamb of God, who went to the slaughter without opening His mouth. So we could continue with all our faults and failings. They are displeasing to God, it is true. But Jesus the divine Victim is ours. Ours are His Person and His holiness, ours His piety and conformity with the will of the Father, ours is His sacrifice. In Him all is as it ought to be, just as the heavenly Father wished it to be. But if all this is ours, we have a right to make use of it, that is, to offer it up in atonement



*The priest blesses the people in the name of the  
Blessed Trinity and by the commission of the Church*





for our sins and imperfections. This is precisely what we do in this prayer. Therefore, we also have the certainty that all our faults will be forgiven, that our sacrifice will be accepted as a propitiation for our sins.

Reflections of this kind should arouse within ourselves a more vivid realization of the atoning power of the holy Sacrifice with regard to our daily sins and failings. God is infinite in His goodness and mercy. No length of time can exhaust it, no number of relapses will wear it out, no human infirmity is incurable to the healing power of His love. In spite of our sin we can be the carefree and joyful children of God, because we know that, "If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just; and he is a propitiation for our sins, not for ours only but also for those of the whole world." (I John 2:1)

### 3. GOD BLESS YOU

The Mass is finished. The faithful are about to return to their homes to take up their daily round of duties. There begins for them now the Mass of life, in which they are to carry out the lessons learned at the Holy Sacrifice. The inspiration and power of the Holy Sacrifice will be with them; that they may faithfully cooperate holy Church blesses them:

*May the almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

The blessing of the almighty God is sufficient for all our needs, powerful enough to overcome all obstacles to our salvation; it is infinite, inexhaustible, has no limitations as to time or place. From the blessing of the Father we may expect a more profound realization of the fact He is our Creator and Lord whom we must serve; our Father in whose wost loving providence we must trust; our last end to which all other ends must be subordinated. The blessing of the Son must impress upon us the value of the human soul, for which He paid the ransom of His blood. To save it is the foremost business of our lives; but we can save it only by following Him as our King. As King and Savior He is also our Judge, who will assign to us our place in eternity. The blessing of the Holy Spirit will open our eyes to the greatness of the treasures of His grace and gifts by which He changes our souls into temples of God. He forms in us the image of Christ and will bring it to perfection in the beatific vision, "Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, we shall be like to him, for we shall see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him makes himself holy, just as he also is holy." (I John 3:2ff)

#### 4. THE LAST GOSPEL

Mysteries of incomprehensible wisdom, power, and love have been enacted upon the altar. The central figure of these mysteries was our divine High Priest



*The priest faces the people, gives them the ancient form of salutation, "The Lord be with you"*



and Victim, Jesus Christ. Holy Church wishes that we should never lose sight of Him. Therefore, she places at the end of the Mass the beginning of the Gospel of St. John, which in a grand way summarizes the majesty of His Person and work.

Jesus is the eternal Word of God, that was with God in the beginning because It has no beginning. In the Word was reflected the infinite imitability of the divine nature and the Father, choosing out of this infinite number of possible worlds, created the existing universe; thus all things were created through the Word. In Him was life, ever active in urging men to open their eyes and see the light which He had kindled in the glory of the universe, for "the heavens announce the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims the works of His hands." But the light shone in darkness; men did not see it because their works were evil. Then, there was a man sent by God, by the name of John, to be a witness to the Word. John preached penance, a change of mind and heart, that would turn the people away from their evil ways. This light now shone in their midst; it was the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world. But even now, as the incarnate Word of God came into His own, His own did not receive Him. They kept their eyes closed to the light and refused to accept the gifts which He offered. Great, beyond all thought and expectation, were His gifts. To all those who believed in Him He gave the life and glory of children of God. The eternal Son of God became man that men might become the children of God. And so the Word of God was made flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen His glory, the glory of the

Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

We have seen the glory of the incarnate Word of God in our midst. Holy Mass is the memorial of all His wonderful works, of His Incarnation, His teachings and miracles, His Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension. There remains nothing but to admire, adore, and give thanks—*Deo gratias!* May we not assume that Jesus in heaven retains some marks of His eucharistic priesthood in the same manner as He retains the marks of His bloody sacrifice? Thus we shall be able eternally to adore the mysteries of the altar—*adoremus in aeternum sanctissimum sacramentum*. For all eternity we shall give thanks for all the inspiration and power we drew from His sacrifice, the joy and consolation of Holy Communion, for all those hours of peace and happiness we spent in His eucharistic presence.

Contemplating, Lord, Thy hidden presence,  
Grant me what I thirst for and implore,  
In the revelation of Thy essence  
To behold Thy glory evermore.

## Conclusion

**T**O LIVE the Mass has become a familiar saying in our days of liturgical revival, and it must be admitted that it is most appropriate. Holy Mass, as the unbloody re-enactment of our Savior's bloody sacrifice, not only brings us salvation in the objective order, but in its celebration also conveys and exemplifies the fundamental principles of Christian living, by the following of which we actually attain salvation and holiness. Following the interpretation of the Mass given in this book these principles may be reduced to the following rules of life:

1. Keep sin out of your life and strive after the utmost purity of conscience. It would be contradiction, inconsistency, and insincerity to assist at the sacrifice of atonement, to profess sorrow for our sins, and to ask forgiveness as we do, especially at the beginning of the Mass in the prayers at the foot of the altar, without making sincere efforts to avoid sin.

2. The Christian's life program must be: Glory to God in the highest. Whatsoever does not or cannot serve this purpose must be absolutely excluded.

3. Know your religion. Religious instruction as given in sermons and in many Catholic books and



magazines supply such knowledge. Some such books and magazines should be found in every Catholic home. But endeavor to read also the Sacred Scriptures, especially the Gospel.

4. Let your daily "Offertory" be your good intention by which you dedicate to the glory of God your daily work and your daily crosses. They are part of the atonement which God expects of you. By humbly accepting them, even rejoicing in them, you can atone for the folly of sin by the folly of the cross.

5. Let your ideal be to be changed into Christ. Your natural self must die and make room for Christ, that He may form your heart according to His own. The pain and agony which you experience in this transformation are your "Consecration."

6. Abide in Jesus that Jesus may abide in you. Live in the blessed consciousness of that union with Him, which He sustains and strengthens by His grace and particularly Holy Communion.

7. See Jesus in your fellowmen and love them with supernatural love. God is their Father and all are His children, brothers and sisters of Christ, and heirs of the heavenly kingdom. Whatever you do to them you do to Christ. Holy Communion, the bread of life for all, is one and the same in all who receive it, since there is but one Christ; therefore also, all must be one in Him.

The above are but the main principles derived from Mass for the conduct of our lives. But a prayerful consideration of the various parts of the Mass will suggest the most practical and often surprising applica-

tions to life. The more the significance of the Mass is understood, and the more its power is used for the realization of the ideal of Christian living, the more holiness there will be among the faithful. Living the Mass is the strongest protection against the spirit of the world; it is the most effective apostolate for the conversion of non-Catholics. It is not by words only that men shall be converted to Christ and His Church, but next to the grace of God it will be done through the example of Catholics who live their faith, and they live their faith most perfectly, if they live the Mass.

Thou, who Mary didst forgive  
And who badst the robber live,  
Hope to me dost also give.  
Here Thy grace and virtue send,  
Grant salvation in the end  
And in heaven felicity.







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